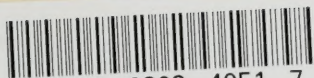


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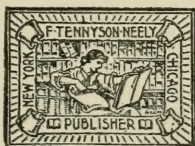
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ROLINA.

BY
EMILY H. HOUGH.

WITH FIFTEEN ILLUSTRATIONS BY F. A. CHAPMAN.



F. TENNYSON NEELY,
PUBLISHER,
LONDON. CHICAGO. NEW YORK.

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*“ The quality of mercy is not strained;
It droppeth like the gentle rain from heaven
Upon the place beneath; it is twice blessed;
It blesseth him that gives and him that takes.”*

—MERCHANT OF VENICE.

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ROLINA.

ROLINA.

CHAPTER I.

A FALL AND ITS CONSEQUENCES.

ROLINA VERNON sat by the window looking out upon the road. The needle, which for several hours had been moving uninterruptedly through some coarse work with which her lap was filled, had dropped from the tired hands; and the deep violet eyes held a yearning, wistful expression, half-perplexed, half-questioning, wholly despondent.

The sweet, patient face, lighted by those violet eyes, was far too sad and wan for one just crossing the dividing line between childhood and womanhood. Presently a figure came in view along the road; only a girl, returning from an errand; but with a face so blithe and care-free, a carriage so buoyant and joyous, that the very sight sent to the heart of the solitary child at the window a pang of keenest pain.

"Aunt says I am too old to run the streets and play," she murmured, her eyes taking in every detail of her unknown neighbor's face and figure. "But oh! if I could only be *that* girl for one day. Why is all the sunshine on some lives, and all the shade on others?"

The pensive face drooped, and the wistful eyes grew heavy with gathering tears, as she strove to solve a problem which has vexed and always will vex older and wiser heads than hers. But presently a sharp

voice broke discordantly in upon her reverie, causing her to turn with a nervous, almost guilty start, as if detected in some unlawful act.

"Sleeping over your work, hey?" said the voice. "Sit up and take your needle, you lazy creature! Do you suppose I can afford to support a drone?"

These, or similar words had fallen so often upon that weary brain, that lonely desolate heart, that they had produced a species of dreary apathy. But for once, a faint color, half-resentful, half-imploring, struggled to the child's pale cheek, as she raised her eyes to the stern face above her. "I am not a drone, Aunt Pringle—but I *must* rest *sometimes*! My head is aching dreadfully! If I could only lie down for a little while, or go out——"

"Go out," interrupted her aunt. "And romp the streets like a tomboy, I suppose—a great girl of your size! This comes of allowing you the indulgence of sitting by the window. Are those aprons ready to send to the 'Home for the Friendless?'"

"No, ma'am," was the response, as the old gloomy expression came sweeping back over the poor face, making it look haggard and prematurely old. "I sat up last night, sewing, until my eyes felt as if they were on fire, and I could not see to thread my needle, so I had to leave them——"

"Leave them!" again interrupted the lady in a voice that was almost a shriek. "And I promised to send them in on Tuesday—and yet you have the impudence to ask leave to sleep or run about the streets? A pretty how-de-do! and right on the back of that article in last week's *Recorder* stating how 'our energetic and self-sacrificing townswoman, Miss Sophia Pringle, had contributed to the "Home for the Friendless," in one short year, nearly two hundred garments, all, as we

understand, the work of her own fair hands, thus affording a practical example of the untiring zeal and devotion this sister manifests in the noble cause of charity;’ and now you will spoil everything, and make me behind in my returns by your laziness!”

Rolina confronted her aunt, still with that stolid, gloomy expression, as the lady paused, breathless with her own praises.

“I can’t help it,” she exclaimed, with the recklessness of utter fatigue and discouragement. “I am worn out, Aunt Pringle; I have sat up every night for the last week, until after 1 o’clock, and it’s killing me! I wonder,” she added impetuously, “if in that fine, large building to which all this work is sent, among those children for whom I have spent so many weary, toilsome hours, there is one more utterly *friendless* than I?”

For a moment Miss Pringle fairly held her breath at the daring words, wrung from the hitherto uncomplaining girl; then rallying in her turn, she brought the offender to her feet with a jerk.

“You insolent minx!” she screamed, “just let me hear such a speech from you again, and I’ll turn you out, bag and baggage. Have you dusted the parlor since dinner?”

“Yes, Aunt Pringle; only a few moments ago.” The momentary burst of feeling was past, and her voice dropped back into its old dejected tone.

“And it’s about half-done, most likely, as usual!” was the disparaging comment. “That is generally the way when you know I am expecting a call from Mr. Glazebrook. Go and dust it over again, and then come right back to these aprons. I shall keep you on bread and water until they’re finished, and perhaps you won’t feel quite so much like flying around the streets.

Come, I'll make sure for once that you go straight to your work, and don't spend your time dawdling and gaping out of the window."

Still clutching the girl's arm, Miss Pringle conducted her to the parlor, opened the door, and gave her a vindictive push into the room. The girl, spent with exhaustion and toil, and utterly dispirited with constant reproaches and revilings, was either unable or indisposed to resist the impetus. There was a fall—a crash—a shriek of mingled horror and rage from Miss Pringle—and then silence for a moment.

A pair of high, old-fashioned porcelain vases occupied positions immediately beneath the mantelpiece, and against one of these Rolina was precipitated; the jar throwing it in turn upon the other one, and sending both to the ground in a pile of fragments. At this crowning catastrophe, the irate spinster let go the last vestige of self-control; and turning furiously upon her niece, who had just regained her feet, she dealt her a blow that stretched her upon the floor a second time.

"You miserable creature!" she exclaimed, choking with passion. "You have ruined my beautiful vases. What did you do it for? Tell me, this instant."

Struggling to a kneeling posture, Rolina clasped her hands in an agony of terror and supplication.

"Oh, aunt! forgive me—forgive me!" she panted. "I tried to stop, indeed I did—but you threw me so hard——"

"I threw you!" echoed Miss Pringle. "If that don't cap the climax! No doubt you will say I broke them next. But I'll teach you better than to attempt such lies," and pulling from her pocket a well-worn leather strap, regardless of Rolina's frantic prayers for mercy or forgiveness, she subjected her to a rigorous beating.

"Now," she exclaimed at last, stopping for breath,

"Put on your hat and shawl and leave my house this instant. I'll not harbor such a lazy, destructive, lying creature another day. Not a stitch shall you take, either, except what is on your back. Go right along."

"Oh, aunt—Aunt Pringle," pleaded Rolina, clutching her dress, her poor pale face ghastly with its new terror. "Don't cast me off. Where can I go?"

"Away with you, I say—not another word," reiterated the spinster, her naturally cruel and vindictive disposition completely in the ascendant and fed by the sense of her power to tyrannize over and torture her helpless victim. I don't care where you go—you miserable pauper, that I took in from the street. Out of my house this moment, and never let me see your face or hear your voice again!"

Dizzily Rolina turned away, heart and brain and body aching. Putting on her hat and shawl in a benumbed, mechanical fashion, she opened the street door, and a moment later the gate inclosing the little garden that had been for so many years her especial care—the one spot of brightness in her otherwise cheerless existence—and stood, an outcast; thrust forth from the only place where she felt she had any right to claim a shelter from storm, want or danger; alone in the world with no voice to counsel, comfort, or warn; no hand to save her from the worst that might befall—at the tender age of fourteen years.

Leaving her there on the threshold of the new existence that is opening before her, we will pause to interpose a brief description of the scenes among which the characters we have introduced to the reader are dwelling.

It is a pleasant Long Island village, possessed of no remarkable or novel characteristics, but quite like the rest of the world in all essential respects. There are several stores; the indispensable post office, that reposi-

tory of news and gossip; a goodly number of churches with their adjoining personages; an ample supply of private dwellings; and conspicuously located on the hill-side the quiet cemetery, one of whose convenient and acceptable services consists in the sudden and permanent arrest it places now and then upon the unpleasant and apparently chronic habit some people have of telling many things they know but ought not to speak of, and many other things they only guess at.

Passing by store, post office, church and graveyard, we go still farther up the street, until we reach the modest residence of Miss Sophia Pringle, situated not far from the church of which she is a bright and conspicuous member. The small garden in front smiles in summer with floral treasures, and the *tout ensemble* of the place impresses the beholder favorably.

Miss Pringle, a spinster of forty years—to which a few more might be added when strict veracity is required—is a shining light in a religious way; flattered and praised by the male members of the congregation, and sometimes anathematized a little by the less appreciative or more discriminating sisters. But Miss Pringle cares for none of these things. She is too good and self-sacrificing to be reached by flattery, and too thoroughly shielded by the panoply of her own conscious worth to be disturbed by envy's poisoned arrows. With a courage free, outspoken, breezy and refreshing, she is ready on all occasions to admonish her erring fellow-mortals of their shortcomings, and to let them know by gentle intimations that the sure and easy road to better ways and an approving conscience may be found by following her example.

Miss Pringle's only companion for some time past had been the child Rolina. The circumstances under which our heroine came within the spinster's jurisdic-

tion will be explained further on. Suffice it now to say that although Miss Pringle received and complacently appropriated repeated encomiums for her charity in providing a home for the girl, and for rearing her with such tender care and solicitude, Rolina was in truth only her overworked drudge, and the humble and unrequited performer of deeds the credit and glory of which were accorded to and appropriated by her guardian.

With this slight digression we will resume the thread of our narrative.

Having gathered up the fragments of her demolished vases with many muttered imprecations upon the author of the catastrophe, Miss Pringle was solacing herself with a cup of tea and a piece of cake, when a knock at the door caused her to set down the cup; and hastily swallowing the last mouthful of cake, she hurried out into the hall and opened the door.

"Ah, good afternoon, dear Mr. Glazebrook!" she exclaimed as her eye took in her visitor. "I am so happy to see you. Really, you have quite neglected me lately. I began to fear that you had forgotten me entirely. But come right in, do."

"Oh, no, sister Pringle," protested the gentleman, stepping into the hall. "It would be impossible for me to forget you, the most devoted worker in our cause. The apparent remissness has been altogether unintentional. You know how numerous are my pastoral duties, but I assure you there is no one of my charge whom I would be less willing to overlook."

The flattered and blushing sister ushered her visitor into the parlor, and inquired if he would partake of any refreshment. The Rev. Philip Glazebrook was the lately arrived incumbent of the adjoining church, a widower with five interesting children. The neces-

sarily forlorn condition of these juveniles afforded a very strong appeal to Miss Pringle's sympathetic heart. Indeed, she felt, as she believed, almost a maternal interest in them, and was indefatigable in her solicitude for their welfare. She considered Mr. Glazebrook a very nice man—quite her *beau ideal* of clerical dignity. Moreover, their ideas on all subjects were so harmonious that she—well, felt a warm interest in his welfare, and always gave him a cordial welcome.

Mr. Glazebrook declined refreshment; and in the same instant turned inquiringly toward his hostess.

"Excuse me, sister Pringle, if I seem unduly inquisitive in asking if you have been disposing of any old relics recently?"

Miss Pringle looked up sweetly.

"In what respect, dear brother Glazebrook? To what do you refer?"

"I refer," responded the gentleman, with a wave of his hand toward the deficient quarter, "to the absence of those two antique vases, which I have been wont to admire, and which stood——"

"Just under the mantel," supplied Miss Pringle. "Yes, you are quite right."

"Quite right in inferring that you have parted with them?" said Mr. Glazebrook. "I am very sorry——"

Miss Pringle's countenance had immediately assumed an expression of beautiful resignation; but just at this point a miniature sob interrupted her questioner.

"Dear brother Glazebrook," she began with a pathetic quaver, "none of us are exempt from trials, you know, and we must endeavor to bear them with fortitude, as you have so often admonished us. I have experienced a severe trial to-day. My beautiful vases, papa's last gift to me, are gone—perfectly ruined," and her face disappeared behind her handkerchief.

"Do please explain by what means, Sister Pringle," urged Mr. Glazebrook with manifest concern.

"Ah! therein lies the *real* trial," murmured Sophia, raising her head. "You have seen my niece Rolina, Mr. Glazebrook. You know how earnestly I have labored to do my duty by her—have clothed, fed and instructed her, and endeavored to train her up in the way she should go. Well, about an hour ago, I directed her to dust this room, which she had purposely neglected. She had been manifesting a very sullen and rebellious disposition all the morning, and when I mildly but firmly insisted upon her performing her duties, she came into this room in a passion and the next thing I knew my vases laid in ruins. She had deliberately thrown them down."

"Dear, dear, how dreadful!" ejaculated her listener. "I would not have suspected the existence of so much depravity in her. She always appeared to me a very tractable child."

"Appearances are deceitful!" sighed Miss Pringle. "Well, I tried to control my own feelings, and remonstrated kindly with my wayward niece."

"A truly Christian spirit," interposed the gentleman, *sotto voce*.

"But," continued Sophia, "so far from exhibiting any repentance, she at once became very defiant and abusive; declared that the accident was my fault and not hers, and that she was glad of it, and finally, before I was aware of her intention, caught up her hat and ran out of the house, saying she would not live with me any longer. I am sorry now that I did, not follow her at once and bring her back;" and she did indeed, realize and regret the loss of her useful drudge: "but I supposed she would get over her temper and return in a few minutes. She has not done so yet, however, and

I really fear the poor child may wander too far away and get lost, for she is not used to being far from home alone. Brother Glazebrook, such ungrateful conduct wrings my very soul with anguish."

"As it well may!" replied her visitor impressively. "But I rejoice, on the other hand, Sister Pringle, that you have been able to conduct yourself throughout with such truly Christian humility and forbearance. By the way, I read in a recent paper of your very liberal donations to that most deserving institution, the 'Home for the Friendless.' My astonishment is equaled only by my admiration at the fact of your having *personally*, as I understand, constructed so many garments for its inmates, in addition to the faithful discharge of your numerous church duties and your hitherto devoted care and guardianship of that unfilial and misguided child. Have you no apprehension lest such unremitting labor may affect your health? Do you not very often trespass upon the hours that should be given to repose while thus obeying the dictates of your benevolent nature?"

Miss Pringle blushed and looked down.

"Sometimes. But, oh, Brother Glazebrook, it is a delightful sacrifice. I am only too thankful to be the humble instrument of bestowing comfort and succor to even a few of my suffering fellow-mortals. But now do tell me about your dear children. You haven't said a word about them, and you know how I do love the little creatures! I believe they are fond of me, too—little Philip, especially. He is a sweet child. Are they well?"

"They are in the enjoyment of tolerably good health at present, I thank you, Sister Pringle," replied the gentleman.

"You must let them run in often to see me, Brother

Glazebrook. They look so lonely, the dear little things. Don't you miss your wife very much?"

"Very much, indeed," and the gentleman sighed.

"I should think you would—on *their* account," said Sophia innocently. "Children do so need a mother's care. Brother Glazebrook, pardon me—but do you think it quite right to mourn a partner's loss to such an extent as to neglect the needs of the living?"

"I don't know that I have considered the matter in exactly that light, Sister Pringle," responded Mr. Glazebrook with a thoughtful air, while the lady became affected with an obstinate fit of coughing. "Your remarks are rational, certainly, and I shall reflect upon them. But then, who would be willing to assume the responsibilities of my household—the care of my large family?"

"Oh, Brother Glazebrook! I cannot understand how any woman with a true sense of duty would hesitate. A minister's wife! why it seems to me a position that any one who desired to do good and be under the best of influence, might well covet," and again the cough served the double purpose of punctuating the sentence and covering the lady's confusion.

"Well, I must leave you, Sister Pringle," said Mr. Glazebrook, rising. "I have overstayed my time; but your society is always delightful and edifying, I quite forget the passing moments. I am deeply obliged to you for your interest in my welfare, and for your valuable suggestions. I shall certainly give them serious consideration. Good-afternoon."

"Good-afternoon," murmured Sophia, retaining his extended hand for a moment in a friendly pressure. "Do call again soon, Brother Glazebrook. I always derive so much benefit from your visits. But I feel so anxious about Rolina; I know I shall not be able to

close my eyes to-night. What shall I do if the child does not come back? I am entirely ignorant of the proper legal course to pursue in such a case."

"I presume so," responded the gentleman, regarding her sympathetically. "I will see that the authorities are notified, and the proper steps taken to recover the prodigal, if she does not return voluntarily. I will stop in the first thing in the morning to inquire."

"But oh, Brother Glazebrook," and in her agitation Sophia laid one hand on his coat sleeve, "suppose—just suppose that the poor child should wander off and die somewhere! I should never be able to forgive myself for my imprudence in allowing her to be so willful—never. I should always feel as though it had been my fault alone."

"Nay, Sister Pringle; the consolation of an approving conscience would sustain you even in that event. You have evidently done your duty by the child and are free from all responsibility or censure. But I see it is beginning to rain and you may take cold in this damp air. Good-day."

Mr. Glazebrook departed, deeply impressed by Miss Pringle's sterling virtues, her affectionate solicitude for his children, and her general excellence of character, and wondering, "whether, if he decided to act upon her suggestion, he could do better than to—to—well, he would think it over at all events." While the object of his meditations exclaimed triumphantly, as his form disappeared from view:

"I think I hit pretty close to the mark that time! I will be able to tell positively when he calls again." Then as she passed into the sitting room, and her eye fell upon the pile of unfinished aprons promised to the "Home for the Friendless," her expression changed to a dark frown.

“What a fool I was to let her escape me! It would be just like her ingratitude to run away for good. And now I’ll have to sew *my* eyes out over these duds, until I can find some one to take her place.”

CHAPTER II

THE CAPTURE AND ESCAPE.

“His brain is wrecked—
For ever in the pauses of his speech
His lip doth work with inward mutterings,
And his fixed eye is riveted fearfully
On something that no other sight can spy.”

—*Maturin's Bertram.*

A GLOOMY building in a damp, unwholesome location; the entire aspect of the place so weird and unnatural as to appear quite in keeping with the sadly significant inscription above the entrance door—*Lunatic Asylum.*

Of all the maladies that exercise so relentless and destructive an influence upon our infirm humanity—thinning the ranks of the learned, the gifted, the beautiful—there is none, perhaps, so unpitiful in its ravages as that which strikes at the very heart of life—almost effacing the Divine likeness with which God has endowed His creatures, leaving its victim destitute of all that distinguishes *life* from mere *existence*—to whom the death angel comes a most welcome visitor.

It is not our purpose to dwell with more than a passing reflection upon the often worse than prisons in which the afflicted, hapless being drags his remaining measure of existence. Of the anguish and aggravated malady too often induced as well as augmented by the horrors of solitary confinement in cramped and unwholesome cells; the tortures resorted to, through the ignorance or

brutality of men who are as truly murderers of their hapless fellow-creatures as though knife or pistol had wrought its swifter and far more merciful work; of the languishing death-in-life, a lengthening chain, each rivet pressing deeper into the soul exiled forever from every joy and incentive of life, but whose sense of pain, whose keenness of suffering seem so much more vividly awake—of these we will not attempt to speak.

One point, however, cannot be justly ignored. The care of the insane is a task offering few desirable or palliating features. Various phases of the malady are of a nature to cause the sensitive to shrink from contact with its victim, thus debarring many of warm and tender sympathies from assuming such a charge, and leaving as substitutes none save those who, with stronger nerves and sensibilities less keen, or blunted altogether through long experience with the rougher side of life, find the task a less trying one. And the severity necessary in some cases is often visited, through ignorance and lack of proper discrimination, alike upon the helpless and unoffending.

With more charity to subdue and restrain the prejudices that so largely impede our usefulness, and more of a self-sacrificing spirit and love to a neighbor, these great wrongs might be righted in very large measure, and the right men and women come to occupy the right places; so that these, our unfortunate brethren, of whom we are accounted keepers, in time might experience in a fuller degree than is now possible under existing conditions, the blessed influence of that mercy that “droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven.”

On a chilly March day a close carriage was driven across the open country toward the asylum. When it was reached three men alighted. The appearance of two indicated that they were connected with the

place in an official capacity; while their companion—a poor, quivering, emaciated creature—betrayed at once by his wild, mournful expression, and the restless, frenzied rolling of his large dark eyes, that seemed like great caverns of woe, whose depths of utter misery and wretchedness no plummet could fathom, the presence of the malady that consigned him to this dreary place.

An hour later a number of the directors and other *attachés* sat in the asylum parlor, their excited tones denoting considerable interest in the subject under discussion.

“This move was entirely unexpected,” remarked one. “He had appeared so quiet and tractable and generally contented the last few months that we considered it safe to allow him considerable liberty—and the first use he makes of it is to give us the slip in the neatest manner imaginable. And such a chase he led us before we caught him!”

“Where did you find him?” asked one of the directors, addressing the last speaker.

“He had mixed up his trail with the adroitness of a professional dodger of justice, and we despaired for awhile of being able to unravel it; but finally we came upon him last Wednesday evening in the upper part of N——, crouching down in front of a dilapidated house, and we stole up and nabbed him before he had the opportunity to offer any effectual resistance; but he fought like a tiger nearly all the way back—as long, at least, as his strength held out. He’ll be glad to lie down and rest for a spell I reckon.”

“I don’t know about that. I expect we will have to apply the straight jacket, and treat him to a long course of solitary confinement to cool down his temper,” suggested another.

"I wonder how the poor wretch sustains life at all; he is reduced to a mere walking skeleton. It would be a mercy to him, and certainly a relief to us, if he should not survive the night."

"Yes, indeed. Why such deplorable specimens of humanity are permitted to cumber the earth is more than I can understand," supplemented a third. "But as we seem to have concluded the business for which we convened, I move that we adjourn for refreshments."

.

Several weeks later, on a pleasant afternoon, there were a number of visitors at the asylum. As they passed the cell in which the recaptured patient was closely confined and manacled, he would scan each face with an eager scrutiny, as though seeking some lost clew, which, just as he would fain have grasped it, eluded his hold and baffled his groping faculties.

Finally, as one gentleman paused before the narrow cell, within which the lunatic paced unceasingly, anon halting at the grated door to press his white, tortured face against the bars—a piteous voice attracted his attention.

"Stop! a moment, for the love of heaven—stop!"

The visitor drew nearer to the iron door which separated them.

"What is it, my friend?" he asked in a soothing tone. "Can I do anything for you?"

The lunatic caught his breath convulsively.

"Oh, so much, so much, if you only *would*! Open this door—this cruel door!—let me out from this dreadful place where I am dying—*dying*! Let me go free, that I may try to find *them* once more!"

The gentleman shook his head deprecatingly.

"I could not do that, my poor fellow: I have no

power to free you. Whom do you wish to find? Perhaps I might bring them to you," he added, in a reassuring tone.

The expression of anguish on the face of the hapless lunatic changed to one of delirious joy.

"Will you? will you?" he cried, shaking the door, in his excitement, until the bars rattled. "Will you bring them to take me away? Oh!" the flush faded from his haggard cheek, leaving it ghastly pale, and his mournful eyes grew heavy with tears. "You don't know what a dreadful place this is! You don't know what I suffer. I never did them any harm—and yet they keep me shut up in this horrible place where I choke and smother. All day long I try to get out, but I can't—I can't, and in the night *they* come!" with a terrified look behind him. "Oh, I shall *die* here!"

Clutching the grating, he fell partly sideways, while a spasm, severe, but happily brief, distorted his face. After a moment he recovered in a measure, and seeing that the visitor was still lingering there, he continued in a more subdued manner and tone:

"Let me tell you about them, that you may help me, if you will, to find them. I got away from here once, and went to try to get them, but before I could get to where they were, these men caught me and brought me back here. But I shall go to them again, some day—they won't keep me here long," and the cunning of insanity gleamed from his wild eyes; "I shall get them back, and then we will be so happy—so happy!"

"But you have not told me," suggested the gentleman, actuated by a desire to glean if possible some intelligible idea, "who it is that you are trying to find. If I knew where to look for them and what to call them, perhaps I might be able to bring them to you."

"Don't you know them?" repeated the lunatic in

accents of surprise. "Everybody knows them; and they have tried to steal them and hide them away, and put me here and call me mad and keep me from finding my treasures. One is tall and fair, and lovely, and said, 'Don't go; don't go,' and one is like the pearl that lies buried in the ocean deeps, and shines with a soft, sweet luster. Oh, find my jewels and bring them back to me!" he exclaimed imploringly, reaching his emaciated hand out through the bars, in the endeavor to touch that of the stranger. "Seek them, as I have done, weary mile after mile, with aching heart and bleeding feet. Find and bring them to me—do bring them—bring them! A-h-h!" his voice died away in a low convulsive moan, and he sank upon his knees in a frightful paroxysm.

At this juncture the keeper, whose attention had been temporarily diverted in another direction, came back.

"See here, you, shut up at once, or I'll put you under the water pipe!" he exclaimed, laying his hand threateningly on the bolt of the door. "We'll have you shrieking all the night long, now, after this circus, I suppose. This way, if you please, sir—" to the visitor.

"He's one of the worst in the place," he said as they passed on, indicating his subject by a backward jerk of his thumb. "Just so sure as any one encourages him to talk, or takes any notice of him, he raises the very old boy afterward. He gave us the slip some time ago, and we have to hold him extra close."

The gentleman made no reply, but soon after left the institution, with his heart and memory full of the sad phases of life that had been there presented to him.

Months lengthened into years, and despite the prognostications—we might almost say wishes—of those who had him in charge, the insane patient to whom we

have directed the attention of the reader, rallied and once more showed signs of improvement, both in his physical health and in his general demeanor and disposition, and by degrees he was again accorded the privileges and liberties so long denied him. For some time he manifested no inclination to take advantage of the larger freedom accorded him, but seemed to have settled into a state of quiet, apathetic melancholy. At last, however, there was another hue and cry; their patient had effected a second escape, as complete and successful as it was ingenious.

A diligent and protracted search was immediately instituted; but although several times they seemed to have struck on the right trail, they were compelled at last to confess themselves hopelessly baffled, and accordingly the pursuit was abandoned. Their patient had vanished as utterly as though he had been engulfed in an earthquake.

CHAPTER III.

TENDER MERCIES.

“How would you be,
If he which the is top of judgment, should
But judge as you do? O, think on that,
And mercy then will breath within your lips
Like man new made.”

—*Measure for Measure.*

EXILED from her only known place of shelter, our poor little heroine, Rolina Vernon, crept off, trembling, to some distance; then as all energy seemed suddenly to forsake her, she sank down behind a wide-spreading walnut tree, whose massive trunk prevented her being observed from her aunt's house, and covering her face with her hands, sobbed disconsolately. She had no idea of ignoring her aunt's mandate by making any attempt to regain her favor; indeed, as the moments passed by, although the distress and perplexity of her present condition seemed to increase, she was at the same time conscious of less and less inclination to return.

She had passed a crisis, or rather, had been, as it were, carried past it, without her own conscious volition, but once fairly upon the other side, the very decisiveness of the act, involving as it did absolute separation from all that she had formerly experienced, brought with it a sense of comparative relief. Although not yet conscious of that increased power and self-reliance that so often seems given to those who are

thrown upon their own resources, the impulse was, notwithstanding, sufficiently strong to urge her forward into the new and untried state of life, feeling and experience upon which she had been so suddenly and so unexpectedly launched.

But for the present, grief, pain and weariness, to which was added a smarting sense of cruel injustice, were paramount, and she sobbed on with unavailing bitterness, varied now and then with a despairing wish that she might die, then and there.

Ungrateful, was it not, Sister Pringle! after all your indefatigable training, comprising the drilling of catechism, and hymns and precepts into that too often aching head, in accordance with your idea of the most approved method of bringing her up in the way she should go, the spirit evinced in that despairing wish was dreadful. But to the mind of our little fugitive her case presented a totally different aspect from that in which the spinster was even then explaining it to her clerical listener—so her emotion could, perhaps, be easily accounted for.

And still she sobbed on, until it seemed as if even that poor luxury had reached its limit, and over the childish face settled an expression of blank despondency. As the afternoon shadows gathered, she saw Mr. Glazebrook leave her aunt's house and direct his meditative steps toward his own domicile. Then her tears flowed afresh, for she was brought once more to a vivid realization of her own homeless condition.

While she still gazed at the house which she could not yet bring herself to abandon entirely, a light gleamed through the window, and she knew it was the hour which her aunt usually occupied with her evening devotions. As the cheering ray streamed out upon the night, now darkening prematurely with an ap-

proaching storm, it brought vividly to her remembrance the hymn which had been her lesson the previous Sabbath, "There's a light in the window for thee," and it awoke an irresistible desire to know whether at this "hour of prayer," a season the sweetest and most solemn to every true Christian, her aunt would have one thought of pity or compassion for the child she had driven from her home that day. Stealing from her place of concealment, she approached the house, slipped into the little garden, and crouched beneath the window to listen, holding her breath with fear and suspense.

Miss Pringle's tones were distinctly audible from within the room, and her prayer was somewhat unusually protracted. A blessing was invoked upon herself and her prospective partner, coupled with a devout request, "that his eyes might be enlightened to perceive wherein lay his true welfare," but not a word in behalf of the shivering little eavesdropper, unless perchance it was implied in the petition, "that all sinners might be brought to a speedy realization of their wicked ways and to the reward they so richly deserved." As these words came, cruelly distinct, to her ears, the child shrank away as if from an additional blow, pressing her hand over her heart that beat with a dull, dreary pain.

Away she trudged, mile after mile, with no idea which way to turn or where to go, but with an inward fever in her veins that urged her on and on, until her feet ached and her clothes were soaked with the falling rain. What mockery were the many bright scenes of domestic life she saw through window after window on that lonely walk! Still more sad and heavy grew the heart of the homeless child, as she stopped anon to rest her weary limbs, in front of some large house, the light streaming out from its windows like a signal of

hope and welcome. Often, obeying the irresistible yearning to draw nearer to its brightness, she would creep stealthily up the garden walk, and pressing her pale face against the lowest corner of the long window, gaze upon the scene within.

A cheerful, handsomely furnished room; the master, in dressing gown and slippers, absorbed in the evening paper; the mistress engaged with a book or fancy work; the happy, animated faces of children; everywhere, opulence or comfort—such was the picture upon which the wayfarer's gaze so often rested. But such scenes only awakened bitter thoughts, and these would be followed by tears and sobs; and the sobs would, of course, alarm the ever-vigilant dog, who, with pertinacious curiosity, would pounce upon the little vagrant, causing her to flee, wild with terror, down the path and out into the street.

The dog, then, with the comfortable consciousness of having performed a commendable act, would return from the pleasures of the chase, to the veranda, wagging his tail with an air of self-satisfaction beautiful to behold; and turning his face toward the street, give further evidence of his vigilance in a series of low, threatening growls.

His portly master, drawn outside by the noise, just in time to see the fleeing figure, and standing upon the porch in his softly lined slippers, and long merino gown, would run his fingers through his hair contemplating the scene with immense satisfaction, while the children caressed their faithful sentinel and protector.

"That's a good Touzer!" the master would say, bending to pat the sagacious animal, who would receive the favor in a manner befitting his station. Stretching himself out upon his four legs so stiffly that one might think him standing upon wooden ones, with head erect

and eyes sparkling, he would by a short, quick bark, give vent to his justifiable pride and appreciation of his master's approval.

"Good dog, Touzer! look out for thieves! These little vagrants ought to be arrested and locked up. Such trespass is becoming altogether too common." And Mr. Pomposity, with an apprehensive glance over his domain, would return to his cozy parlor.

Thieves, forsooth!

Yes, my little friend. It was a misdemeanor thus to steal a view from the dwellings of affluence; and a wise precaution for Mr. Pomposity to keep a fierce dog loose to frighten away such timid little thieves. You had stolen from him—notwithstanding he would never know nor feel his loss—a sight of comfort that seemed like a glimpse into heaven, and made your own condition, as thus contrasted, so much harder to bear!

But Mr. Pomposity has resumed his easy chair and his interrupted paper. Do his thoughts follow the child just driven from his door? Does any throb of pity for her so palpably forlorn condition, or a sympathizing conjecture as to whither the weary footsteps may be tending, or any desire to call her back and offer relief or at least advice, creep in to disturb his composure or enjoyment? Of course not, why should it? The case is by no means uncommon—more's the pity. She is only a pauper—a beggar—for whom, as every well-informed person knows, there are abundant provisions. Alms-houses, commissioners of charities and corrections, overseers of the poor, who draw comfortable salaries from the city treasury, as being especially appointed to look after these creatures. What has a gentleman of wealth and position like Mr. Pomposity to do with the little vagrant? Let her go to the proper authorities.

But perhaps she does not know how to find those proper authorities—how then? Let her find her way as best she can, and not presume to trouble her superiors for direction or assistance. Besides, such as she can get along somehow—they always do; and God alone knows the dire extremity, the crushing, maddening despair, that too often drives them to the living death from which a kindly word, a guiding hand, might have saved them. At all events, one place many of them find sooner or later—the river. Well, the more of them that are weeded out in this way the better; with which philosophical reflections Mr. Pomposity resumes his paper and dismisses the subject. And so reason many others, and by ultimating such thoughts into deeds, illustrate the sad couplet.

“Man’s inhumanity to man,
Makes countless thousands mourn.”

And you, hungry, weary outcast, what will you do? Over yonder stretches a line of woods. You might creep away there, lie down and die; the world will never miss you; and Mr. Pomposity need not run a second risk of having his comfort disturbed by your depredations.

You do not want to die?

No; it takes a long apprenticeship to hardships ere the soul is willing to face voluntarily the great mystery of dissolution. While the limbs are strong, and the frame animated with youthful vigor, almost any alternative seems preferable.

Well, there is the great city. You might go there, and then—well, no one cares what becomes of you then. The depot is in sight, and the train already overdue.

Good-by, little exile! Good-by!

And now we leave her peering in at the window of the waiting room at the —— depot.

In the waiting room of the depot, 9 o'clock approaching, there stood around the stove four merry girls, beguiling the time with lively chat. They were evidently in high spirits, notwithstanding the inclemency of the night, which might be explained by the fact of their having with them that never-failing inspirer of wit and vivacity—a young man. Be that as it may, their merry repartees attracted the attention of all in the room, but more especially that of a gentleman in a white cravat, who was standing on the opposite side of the stove. Who was he?

Let us introduce the Rev. Timothy Simpcox, pastor of an aristocratic city church. Clad in a trim suit of clerical attire, with a shining beaver covering his curling gray locks, he stood with one foot on the fender, his hands folded, regarding his fair neighbors with absorbed attention. Now and then he sighed; but whether the sigh was provoked by their girlish levity, or by some more serious reflection, we will not undertake to determine.

Up in one corner of the room, as far out of sight as possible, sit a young couple, a world of anxiety depicted on their faces, endeavoring to suppress the rebellious wail that arises from a bundle of shawls held in the arms of the girlish companion of the bashful young father.

Do not scowl, my young friend, at the partner of your bosom, as she requests you to assume a position that will shield her from scrutiny while she essays to quiet the little mouth with nature's own balm. Nor have you any reason to blush, as the battery of bright eyes

around the stove is directed upon you with a maliciously mischievous twinkle, whenever a louder wail than usual arises from those infantile lungs.

Pacing up and down, muttering to himself in mysterious wise, is a man of about twenty-seven, of medium stature, well-formed features, dark-brown eyes, and long, dark hair, pushed carelessly back from a full, white forehead, and falling not ungracefully upon his neck. He is James Brutus McCready, an actor—a “star”—at present out of an engagement. His close-fitting cap, the most genteel and fashionable article about him, has seen better days; and his gray traveling shawl shows evidence of long service.

One other person we must introduce, who is traveling under the escort of Mr. Simpcox, her pastor. A young lady, richly attired, stands by the window, toying with the handle of her traveling bag, beside which lies her waterproof cloak; and just as the tearful eyes of our little fugitive peer in at the lower pane Miss Arabella Grimshaw utters a nervous scream, and points to the face pressed against the glass.

All eyes are turned at once to the window; but there is nothing now to be seen save the blackness of the night.

One other, however, has seen that face—McCready, who, with that quick perception that seems intuitive in those who themselves have battled with adverse fortunes, takes in the situation, and darts from the room just in time to see the fluttering garments of the fleeing child. On they go, pursuer and pursued, until the exhausted girl can run no farther, and wheeling suddenly around, drops on her knees before him.

“Oh, sir!” she panted, in a paroxysm of terror. “Don’t hurt me, I’ll never do it again. I didn’t know it was wrong.”



"DON'T BE AFRAID, LITTLE ONE."

Bending over her, McCready raised her to her feet.

"Don't be afraid, little one," he said, in his most gentle and reassuring tone. "Don't tremble. You have done nothing wrong that I know of—and I wouldn't hurt you under any consideration—not for the world."

The child, upon whose ears so few gentle tones or kindly words had hitherto fallen, involuntarily drew nearer to him.

"What is your name, my child, and what brings you here at this time of night, and in such a storm?" continued McCready. "Where is your home?"

Once more the ready tears suffused her cheeks.

"I have *no* home, no place to go to." In broken, almost inarticulate accents, she told him of her desolate condition.

McCready listened attentively, meanwhile stroking the small, cold hand.

"A hard case, at your age, child," he said, convinced by her simple straightforward recital. "Not a rare one either—more's the pity! If only I knew of some good place to take you to. I suppose you don't want to go back?"

"No—never!" she interrupted, clinging to him in an excess of agitation. "She would beat me so. I'm afraid of her. I would rather wander around in this way, and die somewhere at last, where she could never find me. Please don't send me back to her." She gazed around, shuddering, as though expecting even there to see that sharp, pitiless face peering at her from out the darkness.

"I don't intend to send you back, child—never fear," replied McCready with emphasis. "Nor shall you die either, if I can help it. I'm poor enough, myself, God knows, but what little I have you shall share. Will

you go with me to my home in New York, until I can decide what to do for you?"

"Yes—yes. I will go with you anywhere," Rolina exclaimed impulsively, her whole countenance beaming with newly inspired confidence. "Only take care of me and don't let my Aunt Pringle get me again, never—never."

"Well, come back with me to the depot, and as soon as the train comes in we'll start," said McCready kindly. "I cannot promise you very superior accommodations, but such as they are you are welcome to. And I will look about for some place to put you in, where you will be well taken care of."

He took her hand to lead her along, but the combined fatigue, terror, and excitement had so weakened her that she reeled and would have fallen had he not caught her. So without more ado he lifted her in his arms, and carried her back into the waiting room, and place her in a chair by the stove, greatly to the disgust of the occupants already there, and particularly Miss Grimshaw.

Ah, Miss Arabella! do not turn so contemptuously away, drawing your elegant garments around you, as if fearful that contamination may result from any chance contact with the little vagrant. The time will come when you will kneel to her as to your best—ay, your only earthly friend. Verily pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.

But Rolina, wet, weary, footsore, glad of any shelter, paid no attention to the feeling manifested toward her by her fellow-travelers. As memory brought back the toil, pain and suffering that had been crowded into that one short afternoon, lengthening it, as it were, into a year of misery, and leaving upon her soul an impress which no subsequent years of peace and happiness

could ever entirely efface, tears dimmed her eyes afresh, and her slight form shivered with more than cold.

Observing the nervous tremor that shook her frame, McCready took off his traveling shawl, and bending over her, wrapped it around her, quite indifferent to certain comments which the somewhat eccentric act elicited. At last the train was heard rushing in and McCready, who had been for the last few moments on the platform outside, came in, and approaching his charge, said cheerily.

"Come, little one—train's here."

"But I have no money," Rolina faltered, with a sudden realization of her impoverished condition.

"Never mind—I'll take care of that," responded McCready. "You shan't be left behind. So cheer up, there are better times ahead, I hope."

His buoyant tones inspired the child with new strength and courage. Rising, she timidly tendered him the shawl, but was good-humoredly commanded to keep it for herself; and in another moment he had taken her once more in his arms, and lifted her on board the train.

With all her doubts and fears at rest, and her heart beating more hopefully than it ever had before, Rolina nestled beside her new-found friend, and soothed by the rumble of the train fell into a sound slumber, with her weary little head pillowed upon his arm.

Thus were strangely brought together at that depot several characters whose fortunes, strangely intertwining with each other, we will follow through this narrative.

CHAPTER IV.

A CALL TO ARMS.

"Your honor calls you hence,
Therefore be deaf to my unpitied folly,
And all the gods go with you; upon your sword
Sit laurel victory; and smooth success
Be strewed before your feet."

—*Antony and Cleopatra.*

BEFORE advancing any further in our narrative we ask the reader's company in a retrogressive journey to the year 1861.

In a town not many miles distant from the scene of our opening chapter lived John Vernon, junior partner in the firm of "Grimshaw & Vernon, Wholesale Dry Goods Merchants." His family consisted of his wife and one daughter, Rolina, a child of about six years.

Mr. Vernon had married with some misgivings as to whether his means would enable him to support his wife in the style to which she had been accustomed and provide her with those many little elegancies almost indispensable to refined tastes and habits. But although favored from childhood by the indulgence of wealthy and doting parents, Mrs. Vernon proved herself a true woman in this emergency, fondly assuring her young husband that his love and companionship would supply the want of material luxuries, and that nothing could give her more genuine happiness than to

be able to demonstrate to him that she could be comfortable and content with very little, so long as she was assured of his affection and protecting care.

Accordingly, on his return from a short, but delightful wedding tour, Mr. Vernon purchased a cottage in the suburbs of the city, and immediately set energetically to work to augment his income. And he soon realized the need of more urgent efforts, for before the end of the first year his wife's parents were stricken with a sudden and fatal disease, which carried them off within a few days of each other. Her father's death furthermore disclosed the startling fact that in consequence of recent unfortunate speculations, his estate was hopelessly insolvent. The child of opulence and luxury thus found herself wholly dependent upon her husband's exertions, save what remained of her wedding gift.

But with increased energy and courage, Mr. Vernon addressed himself to the work before him. His untiring efforts and steady industry were ere long crowned with success; and when at the end of two years their union was blessed with a daughter, his business was flourishing, and he felt that complete success was not far distant.

"Yes, dear wife," he said, bending over her chair and laying a caressing finger upon the velvety cheek that rested against her bosom. "At this rate, I shall soon be able to exchange these somewhat cramped quarters for spacious and elegant surroundings, where our little daughter can receive her first impressions in that sphere of refinement from which I have been compelled for a while to withhold you."

Mrs. Vernon smilingly shook her head.

"Don't be precipitate, John. This house is not at all cramped, and it suits our present small family very

well. As to refinement you have not withheld from me anything that I needed; and mere fashion I care very little about. This tiny treasure is of infinitely greater worth to me than Dame Grundy or Madame Alamode!" She drew her infant closer, smiling upon her firstborn with all a young mother's wealth of affection. "Let our first care be to secure a competency that will insure our support and comfort in our declining years. That is the wisest way."

"So it is, Lina," Mr. Vernon answered, as he bent to kiss her. "Your judgment is best. 'Slow and sure' shall be our motto; and in a few years, if our little daughter is spared to us, we shall be able to provide her with those advantages and opportunities that make life to the young so beautiful and attractive."

Little Rolina was not yet a year old when her father received from a Mr. Grimshaw, who had for some time observed and admired his business talent, the offer of a junior partnership in the large dry-goods establishment which Mr. Grimshaw had up to that time conducted alone. Mr. Vernon at once laid the proposition before his wife, dilating with boyish enthusiasm upon the increased advantages and business facilities that would be afforded by a partnership in that flourishing establishment. Mrs. Vernon demurred, at first, at his leaving his own settled business, and embarking his all in this new enterprise; but her husband, being of a sanguine temperament, succeeded eventually in overruling her objections. The necessary arrangements were completed; Mr. Vernon wound up his own business, invested all his capital—including a mortgage on his house—in the new enterprise, and commenced again the exciting and enlivening pursuit of wealth, as one of the firm now advertised as "Grimshaw & Vernon, Importers and Wholesale Dry Goods Merchants."

For a time everything prospered. Mr. Vernon's business talents displayed themselves to increased advantage in this enlarged field of operation, and many of his early friends, still pursuing the dull routine of slow progress out of which he had emerged with meteor-like swiftness and brilliancy, were accustomed to shake their heads and say:

"Vernon's a lucky fellow; everything he touches turns to gold. That's just the way with some people: Dame Fortune smiles with special favor upon them, and all they have to do is to accept her proffered gifts."

Matters were progressing after this satisfactory fashion, and Mr. Vernon's perpetual theme was the affluence and luxury he would soon be able to bestow upon his wife, when the somber cloud of intestine war, suddenly gathering, discharged its thunderbolts; and from city to plain, from village to mountain, was heard in trumpet tones, loud and long, the startling appeal:

"To arms! To arms!" and from every point came back the loyal response, "Ay! ay!" From homes, kindred, friends, children and wives, went the gallant hosts, that by their prompt obedience they might the more effectually protect, retain, and preserve them.

Among the foremost to organize a company and rush to the front was John Vernon. The first news of the outbreak reached him while seated in his counting room awaiting the arrival of Mr. Grimshaw, for whom he had an important business communication. But at this startling intelligence every other idea or purpose vanished, and leaving the store he bent his excited steps toward home.

"What is the matter, John?" Mrs. Vernon asked, springing to meet him. "What has happened? Are you ill?"

"No, not ill! but see there, Lina!" indicating the

headlines to the last *Extra*, with shaking hand. "The die is cast. War is upon us."

A deadly faintness swept over the devoted wife; then she laid an imploring hand upon his arm.

"And *you?*" she faltered with quivering lips.

Vernon regarded her abstractedly for a moment; then his countenance kindled with the fire of patriotism.

"*I?* Can I stay behind? Can I falter or hesitate, when my country calls? No—let me be among the first! Thousands have already started."

But his words aroused no responsive enthusiasm. To the young wife and mother they were but prophecies of the loss of all she held dear, and she hid her face in his bosom in a passion of bitter weeping.

"Why, Lina," he gently urged, "are you not willing to spare me for a little while for the sake of our country? The sooner we strike the decisive blow the sooner the trouble is ended, and you will have me back again, with this happy and consoling reflection—that I went to the defense of my country in her hour of peril."

"How do I know that you will ever return?" sobbed the heartbroken wife. "Or that I shall not soon hear that some bullet has separated you from me in this world forever? You are my earthly all—I cannot give you up!"

"Don't be so faint-hearted, Lina, dearest! I will write to you; and if not called into active service immediately, may even obtain a short furlough. A hundred men would go at once if I would head a company. Come, be a heroine. Like the wives of the soldiers of old, bind my knapsack on my back, and bid me 'godspeed.'"

"And can you leave her—your only child?" said Mrs. Vernon, pointing to a sofa on which the little Rolina lay, wrapped in rosy slumber.

Vernon's face paled as he bent for a moment over the little sleeper. Then he stood erect and calm.

"Yes, since it is for your sake and hers that I go, Lina. It is hard to part; but our prayers will hold us together, and in God's good time we shall be again united. Spare me, my dear wife, for the greater good the sacrifice will bring."

The wife stood for a moment with clasped hands, as if in mute supplication; then sinking into his arms she faltered:

"You have won, John; go, and may God be with you."

"God bless you, darling! When peace is restored you will not regret this sacrifice," replied her husband, straining her to his heart. "Now I must muster my company without delay."

He was out of the room in another moment, while the mother sank on her knees beside her child, striving to subdue the giant despair wrestling within her heart. A long time she knelt there; then rising with her face fixed and painfully calm, went about her accustomed duties, as though her happiness had not that day been quenched forever.

Meanwhile, among his friends and neighbors, Vernon, by his resistless eloquence, soon raised a company. Then came the final pang. Sons were parting from mothers, husbands from wives and families, brothers from sisters, lovers from sweethearts; and upon the souls of many rested with prophetic force the dread conviction that it was a parting that would be followed by no reunion this side of the dark river.

Long did Mrs. Vernon lie in her husband's arms, feeling as if each moment must be her last; and when he finally loosened her clinging arms, and pressing upon her lips his final kiss, lifted his wondering child

for a moment to his knee, her heart died within her. Then with face ghastly pale she watched him as at the head of his company, with drums beating and colors flying, he marched down the street.

A long way the road was lined with relatives and friends of the brave band, and handfuls of flowers were strewn before the feet of the heroes going forth to do battle for the cause of liberty. And thus with many fond adieus, many tears, prayers and blessings, their pathway strewn with blossoms yielding up their last breath in sweet incense, these gallant fellows left their homes. And upon many of those on whose faces the setting sun that day shed his golden glory, it was destined no more to rise or set in the midst of those dear, familiar surroundings.

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Several weeks passed, and the hearts of anxious ones at home had been lightened by frequent messages from their absent friends, when a large division, comprising the regiment to which Vernon and his company had been assigned, received orders for an immediate march. At an early hour the troops were in motion, once more oblivious of everything save the excitement of the hour, as they marched along the road with fluttering banners, burnished arms, and the inspiring sounds of martial music. From every building and other available spot, flags were thrown joyously to the breeze, while many a cheer resounded, and many a blessing was invoked upon the loyal host.

So for two days they traveled on, while upon the faces of the commanders rested a serious look that deepened every hour; until at length they reached their next—perhaps last camping-place. There was little conversation, save an occasional word of earnest exhortation or advice, but much of silent, serious thought.

On the eve of an engagement, with only twenty-four hours, perchance, between them and eternity, with the inevitable prospect of ghastly wounds and weary imprisonment! Thoughts like these filled each mind that night.

Many heads were bent in silent, earnest prayer; many hitherto thoughtless wavering ones, whose souls were as yet drifting anchorless upon the great sea of life, turned with involuntary reverence and reliance toward those whose hope and faith were strongly manifest, as though by their steadfast trust to gain shelter and protection in the impending crisis.

Night passed and morning came, and the march was resumed, which in another hour brought them into the thickest of the fray. Shot and shell poured in on both sides, mowing down the ranks like wheat before the harvester; and yet the battle raged with deadly and undiminished fury, each side resolved to conquer or die.

But it became only too evident that from the brave band who had left their native town so blithely only a few months before, no shout of victory would be raised on this first battleground. Despite their valor the tide of battle was against them. Flesh and blood could not withstand the terrible onslaught; and routed, conquered, dismayed, they fled, leaving the field strewn with the wreck of the once gallant regiment.

As soon as the troops could be brought into some degree of order, and were fairly beyond the missiles of the foe, the exhausted soldiers threw themselves upon the ground, completely spent by their exertions. When in a measure rested the roll of each company was called.

"Herbert Foster!" "Here!" "William Merwin!" "Here!" "John Vernon!"—no answer, save in the pallor upon the already haggard faces of his surviving comrades. So the rollcall went on, and when the last

surviving man had answered to his name a small group of Vernon's fellow-townsmen met together with wan and troubled faces.

"Who will send the news to his wife?" asked one. "Poor little woman. I shall never forget her last yearning look as we marched away. This shock will kill her. And his very first battle—poor fellow."

"Suppose you write to her, Foster?" suggested another comrade.

"No—I can't!" Foster replied in a choking voice. "You had better do it, Edwards—you knew her best."

And so the simple sheet of paper freighted with its sorrowful tidings went on its way; and the gallant band, nothing daunted by its first disaster, went forth again to plunge more deeply into the deadly strife.

CHAPTER V.

THE WOUNDS OF A FRIEND.

“But then I sigh, and with a piece of scripture,
Tell them—that God bids us do good for evil:
And thus I clothe my naked villainy
With old odd ends, stol’n forth of holy writ,
And seem a saint when most I play the devil.”

—*Richard III.*

POOR Mrs Vernon, on receiving the letter telling her that her husband had fallen in battle, at first sank under the blow, but was soon aroused from the apathy that succeeded her burst of grief and despair by the stern call of necessity. She then wrote to Mr. Grimshaw, with whom, her husband had given her to understand—as well as he could, in his excited condition, before their final parting—he had made arrangements that secured to her a comfortable support, if he should fail to come back to his home.

Mr. Grimshaw was a highly respectable man, an official member of the church of which Dr. Simpcox was pastor, and to which his donations, as every one knew, were constant and liberal. This estimable gentleman was ready at all times to listen with a grave and profound sympathy to a tale of distress, and to form brilliant and beneficent plans for speedy relief; at the same time wisely and prudently delaying the charitable acts to which that sympathy would lead, as we preserve our best china for display on rare and prominent

occasions. And yet, strange to say, he read with a very unreligious look the widow's simple and touching letter, and when he had finished it uttered an exclamation which any disinterested and unprejudiced hearer would unhesitatingly have reported as a "damn it." Then tossing the missive into the fire, he began to pace the room.

"Here's a pretty state of affairs! Vernon, like a fool, goes off to the war and is shot, and now his widow comes to me for his share of the business. His share indeed! When a man is not on the spot to look after his business interests what guarantee is there that his share will amount to anything? I have enough to do to look after my own interests, and my family and my church, without attending to those of other people. Self-preservation is the first law of nature, and the only law that enables a man to keep his head above water in these times. The man had no business to marry and then go to the war and be shot, and expect me to support them the rest of their lives because he had at one time an interest in the business. Absence is equivalent to dissolution of partnership—or ought to be. He deliberately abandoned his business from a crazy sentiment of patriotism, instead of sending a substitute, as I did, to be shot in his stead; and his family cannot expect to look to me for assistance. However, I suppose I had better call on the widow and tell her frankly how matters are and advise her to find something to do—plain sewing for instance. Sewing is easy; and if she should have to sell a few of her fine dresses and trinkets it's no more than she must get used to as a poor man's widow. Poor people have no right to be proud or fastidious."

After these very logical and charitable reflections Mr. Grimshaw looked at himself in the glass, put on his overcoat and hat, and set out on his visit.

"Good-morning, Mrs. Vernon; I learned with much sorrow of your affliction," he said, as upon reaching the house he was ushered into the little parlor. "But we must endeavor, Mrs. Vernon, to bear our trials with fortitude and resignation."

"I do try, Mr. Grimshaw," sobbed the widow. "But it is so dreadful a bereavement."

"Doubtless you find it so—very. Your emotion is perfectly natural; but time blunts our sorrows, you know. Is there anything I can do to help you? that is, in the way of advice," correcting himself hastily, "You will always find, Mrs. Vernon, that I have an ear open to every tale of deserving need. I consider it a duty to give advice whenever it may be of use. It is painful, of course, to listen to tales of woe, but I count it a duty, you see, and so it comes easier. Do not hesitate to unburden your mind."

"You are very kind, Mr. Grimshaw," murmured Mrs. Vernon. "I have sent to you because you are the only one to whom I can turn now. In the excitement of enlisting my husband gave me only a confused idea of the state of his business, but said he had made arrangements with you that would secure our comfortable support."

"Well—yes—ahem! that is a trifle indefinite," Mr. Grimshaw responded, scraping his throat, while a singular greenish light crept into his eyes. "May I ask what your exact expectations are, Mrs. Vernon?"

"I cannot tell," replied the widow faintly. "This dreadful and unexpected blow has still further confused and distracted ideas only faintly grasped at the time. He left me some money in the bank to draw from, and as that is now about exhausted, I am obliged to fall back upon what I understood to be a permanent interest in the business."

"Well, no, ma'am, not exactly," replied Mr. Grimshaw hastily. "I—you—that is, I think your recollection must be at fault, and you overestimate that matter to some extent. Your husband speculated largely during the last year of our connection, using my funds as well as his own, and the results were—ah—not quite what we had anticipated." Mr. Grimshaw was equally careful not to divulge that they had far exceeded his expectations—"so that it does not leave you a great deal, you see. To be sure there was a little; but his withdrawal has so damaged the business that it will, I fear, be impossible to escape a general assignment for the benefit of creditors, and that will leave nothing for either you or me.

"I have thought it advisable, Mrs. Vernon, to speak plainly, in order that you may be prepared for the worst," he continued, as the utterly dispirited woman leaned her head upon her hand, unable longer to repress her tears. "It may not be quite so bad as I fear; I shall know within a few weeks; meanwhile, you had better try to recover your spirits. I will see you again before long, and arrange some plans for your future. Good-morning, Mrs. Vernon." He placed a small roll of bills in her hand, and taking his hat, bowed himself out.

"Aha! it's an ill wind that blows nobody good," muttered Mr. Grimshaw as he walked briskly away. "Vernon's sudden withdrawal, just as he was becoming indispensable to the business, was in direct opposition to my judgment and advice, and I don't intend to lose more than I can help on his account. I can see that his widow knows no more about business than—well women in general, so there will be no legal consequences to be afraid of. But I must fix up my accounts and books so that if some meddlesome lawyer should

undertake to pry into the matter I can be prepared to sustain my assertions. Vernon's copy of our contract, if found, might make me some trouble; but he has probably left those papers in some safe deposit concern, expecting to find them when he came back. But now I shall consider myself their legal custodian if I am ever able to find them; and once in my possession they will do no further harm to anybody."

Several weeks wore away in trying suspense, when finally one afternoon Mr. Grimshaw, with a very grave face, presented himself again at the widow's residence.

"Has it come to the worst, Mr. Grimshaw?" she asked, seeing that he hesitated to speak first.

"It has, Mrs. Vernon! In the midst of life we are in death!"

"Is *all* gone?" the widow faltered.

"Your husband's share is entirely gone," said Mr. Grimshaw, averting his face from a moment, "I have managed, after satisfying my creditors, to save a trifle from the wreck—but only a trifle."

For a moment Mrs. Vernon sat like one stunned; then raising her haggard face, she said faintly.

"Mr. Grimshaw, what can be done? I have this house left, to be sure——"

"Pardon me, Mrs. Vernon," interposed the gentleman, with a deprecating wave of his hand. "I have another painful disclosure to make. When your husband became my partner, not having the full amount of the required capital, he made up the balance by giving me a mortgage on this house."

"A mortgage!" gasped the widow.

"Yes, madam. He might, I suppose, have discharged the indebtedness sooner; but it was overlooked and has been accumulating interest ever since.

"What is the amount?" Mrs. Vernon asked faintly.

"Three thousand dollars, ma'am—I am sorry to say "

"I was not aware that any such incumbrance existed," Mrs. Vernon said in a choking voice, when she could recover sufficiently from the utter consternation and sinking despair to which she had been subjected by this new disclosure.

"I presume not," returned the senior partner. "I am prepared, however, to submit this proposition to you, Mrs. Vernon. The best way, you know, to transact business is on strictly business principles."

"Yes," acquiesced the widow faintly.

"My extensive donations of late to charitable objects, coupled with this failure, have reduced me almost to beggary; but I will secure you a nice room or two at a low rent. Real estate, as perhaps you know, is absolutely dead, at present. However, I will at once make an effort to sell this property, and all I realize over the actual incumbrance shall be divided with you. In the meantime, I will advance you one hundred dollars, which will supply your needs for the present; and I will try to put you in the way of finding some kind of employment. Come, Mrs. Vernon, things might be much worse. With a friend to advise and assist you, you ought to feel encouraged and hope for the best."

"I know you are very kind, Mr. Grimshaw," sobbed the widow. "But I am entirely in the dark! I know not which way to turn or how to begin."

"You can sew, I suppose—and I can doubtless obtain employment for you. Sewing isn't hard, and its reasonably profitable if you're smart at it. Then there's the little girl—to be sure she'll be an incumbrance—your best way, I think, will be to put her in an orphan asylum, where——"

Thus far Mrs. Vernon had been receiving his advice with listless, apathetic acquiescence, but now she raised her head, while the blood leaped to her cheeks.

"Don't make any such suggestion to me, Mr. Grimshaw! My child is all I have left to live for. To put her away from me among strangers, while I have strength to earn a crust to divide between us is a proposition I would not entertain for a moment."

"Well, let that pass," said Mr. Grimshaw, unwilling, apparently, to provoke further discussion. "You can manage, I believe, by diligence and economy. Let me see—this is Thursday. Can you be in readiness to move next Monday?"

"I suppose so," the widow responded wearily. "Since I must leave the home I thought was mine, I may as well leave it at once."

"Thirty-five hundred clear, by that operation," mused Mr. Grimshaw, as he walked away from the house. "And this assignment cancels all my business obligations, while the sale will rid me of my old stock, so that I will have a small fortune to commence with. That is failing to some purpose. It is lucky for me that my late partner's widow knows nothing of business. Talk to a woman about figures and mortgages, and how much more does she know when you're through?"

Nicodemus Grimshaw retired to his couch that night and slept the sleep of the just, and rose next day full of self-congratulation at his business tact and sharp lookout for the main chance. The thick and hard crust of selfishness that had been accumulating around his heart for years, was not to be broken or disturbed by the divine denunciation against those "who devour widow's houses, and for pretence make long prayers."

At noon on Monday Mr. Grimshaw and a cart were at the widow's residence. An hour later she and her

household belongings had been transferred to two small rooms in a tenement house, from the close atmosphere of which she shrank with instinctive abhorrence. The landlady, a sharp-featured woman of fifty, appeared at the door of the larger apartment after the furniture had been carried in.

"Good-day, mum," she jerked out. "The rent's seven dollars a month, strictly in advance. I hope you're good pay."

"I think you will find her so," volunteered Mr. Grimshaw as the widow stood trembling and silent. "Here is the address of the place I was speaking of, Mrs. Vernon. Keep up your spirits, and no doubt you'll get along. Good-day."

After paying the carman, and her landlady, and making some necessary purchases, Mrs. Vernon found herself possessed of the sum of seventy-five dollars; all she could depend upon to support herself and her child, until she might succeed in obtaining some employment at the place the address of which, on a slip of paper, Mr. Grimshaw had left in her hand.

It was all the poor widow could do, broken down by grief and adversity, to put her little place to rights that afternoon; and when it was at last accomplished, a simple supper prepared and eaten, and she laid herself down beside her child to try and rest, she felt that it would be a blessing if that sleep might be to them their final one in this world.

But it needs a hard struggle with adversity to make the truly brave spirit entirely willing to let go its hold upon its earthly tabernacle. When morning came, although her heart fainted within her, and all hope in life seemed gone, Mrs. Vernon was constrained to arouse herself afresh, and direct her remaining energies toward obtaining the means of subsistence for herself

and the little one whose life she held in keeping. Accordingly, after breakfast, she set out for the place where Mr. Grimshaw had advised her to apply.

It was already besieged by applicants, and her sad heart grew still more heavy as she looked down the long line of faces, pinched by adversity, and realized what an immense wave of penury and woe was continually rolling up upon the shores of worldly power and prosperity. After much weary waiting and endeavor, she procured some work; but she grew sick at heart as the meager remuneration was made known to her.

"How can I ever, by such labor as this, earn enough to keep us from starving?" she murmured, as she sat down in her room with the coarse work in her lap. "The money I have will last but a few weeks, and when that is gone what will become of us? Verily my house is left unto me desolate! Husband, home, fortune, swept from me by one cruel calamity. And yet—" she dropped her work and catching her child from the floor pressed her convulsively to her bosom, "while this little blessing is spared to me, I cannot quite despair."

But the days went by all too rapidly, her slender funds growing less and less, while despite her unremitting assiduity her earnings scarce deserved the name. An afternoon in early winter found her with throbbing temples intent upon some sewing, the payment for which was required to make up the rent, due on that day, and already peremptorily demanded by the landlady.

The work completed, she took little Rolina with her, not daring to leave her alone at so tender an age, and set out to deliver it. As she handed in her bundle, the foreman gave it a hasty inspection; and her pale cheek

flushed with joy as he turned toward the money drawer, when, with a sudden frown, he caught up a portion for a second survey. There was a brief, painful silence—then with an angry imprecation, he deliberately rent one seam from end to end.

“That don’t suit,” he said shortly. “It will have to be done over.”

The widow tottered, and her sight failed her; then recovering herself by a desperate effort, she faltered:

“Can you not pay me for what is satisfactory? I am in urgent need of the money, and——”

“It’s contrary to rules to pay that way,” was the reply. “When the work is all in you get your money—not before. We make no exceptions to suit individual cases.”

Dizzily Mrs. Vernon turned away. How she reached home she never exactly knew; but when she came to herself once more, she resolve to appeal to Mr. Grimshaw for some further aid in the present emergency; and accordingly she wrote and mailed him a letter that afternoon.

Near noon the next day Mrs. Vernon heard a heavy footstep on the flight of stairs leading to her apartments, and then a sharp knock on the door, which on being opened admitted Mr. Grimshaw. His countenance, all compassion at their last interview, now wore an ugly frown, and his eyes flashed as he strode into the apartment and confronted his late partner’s widow. He had nothing to fear from her now. Time had passed, and the fraudulent trick by which he had robbed her of her all had been neither detected nor exposed. No one knew of his base betrayal of trust, nor had any thought of compelling his restoration of a farthing of his ill-gotten gains. None but He, who at the final accounting will reward every man according to his works.

"Am I to understand, Mrs. Vernon, that you wrote *this?*" Mr. Grimshaw demanded, holding up the offending missive.

"I did, Mr. Grimshaw. I am, through an unexpected misfortune in the matter of my work, entirely destitute of the means to meet my rent, now due. As you promised to render me any assistance you could, I have ventured to apply to you for temporary aid."

"Upon my word," cried Mr. Grimshaw, quite losing command of himself. "Do you expect me to *support* you, madam?"

"No, sir," replied the widow with dignity. "I ask only for some of the money to which I feel I am entitled. I know that your business is again prospering. I know also that the house which I left in your hands has been disposed of at an exceptionally good price, and that you promised to pay over to me one-half of what you received for it over the incumbrance. I therefore now ask for a part of the profits of that transaction."

In a moment Mr. Grimshaw comprehended the situation.

"You are remarkably well posted in regard to my affairs, my dear madam," he said, still preserving a semblance of courtesy. "Perhaps you are also aware that by signing a certain paper which you will remember, you relinquished all right to any interest that you once might have had in my business? I have done all I promised to do for you, and I cannot undertake the support of more than one family—my own. If you are at all handy with your needle, you ought to be able to earn a living for yourself."

"You forget, Mr. Grimshaw, that there is more than myself," said Mrs. Vernon quietly. "I have my child to provide for."

“And there is an instance in which you manifested an obstinacy very reprehensible in your circumstances,” observed the gentleman oracularly. “I advised you at the outset how to dispose of that incumbrance. There are plenty of places to which she could have been sent, and——”

“There are plenty of places where she could have languished and died, Mr. Grimshaw,” interrupted the widow, her eyes flashing. “A fact of which you are as well aware as I am. No; while I have life and strength to work for her, nothing shall part us. Sir,” she continued, now thoroughly aroused, and facing her visitor fearlessly; “my eyes have been opened lately, and I can see the meaning of your actions from the first. You discovered that in the excitement of leaving my husband had left me no distinct idea concerning his business arrangements. You knew that he fully confided in your honor; and taking advantage of my appeal for advice, you wilfully defrauded me out of my all! You found me an easy victim, Mr. Grimshaw! You traded upon my poverty, grief, and utter ignorance of business ways to compass your own dishonest purpose; and even now, when I see and realize the dreadful wrong you have done me, my hands are tied—for in these degenerate times there is no justice for the poor. I have not the wherewithal to pay for the recovery of what is lawfully mine, nor even the legal proof necessary to establish my claim. Nicodemus Grimshaw, you are a false-hearted hypocrite. You have reared your fortune upon the ruin of the widow and orphan; but there is a just God in heaven to whom you must one day render an account, and when He maketh inquisition for blood He will not forget the cry of the humble. When my body lies in the grave may this reflection haunt you forever and ever—

that my death, and perhaps that of my innocent, helpless child, lies at your door."

Perhaps Mr. Grimshaw heard at this moment the stealthy footstep just outside, for the frown left his countenance as if by magic, and his voice was unusually sweet and soft when he spoke this time.

"My dear lady, it really grieves me to witness such an ungrateful return for my efforts in your behalf. Notwithstanding, I would assist you in this strait were it possible—but it is not. Charity begins at home, you know, Mrs. Vernon. But although I can afford you no temporal aid, you may always be assured of my sympathy and good wishes. We must look for trouble in this world, and should regard it as only a just recompense for our shortcomings——"

"Be done!" cried Mrs. Vernon, her face aflame with indignation. "God only knows why you are not smitten to the earth with those lying words upon your lips—profaning and outraging every principle of the cause you professedly espouse. Do not attempt to delude me any further. I can see at last to the very core of your false, treacherous heart!"

Mr. Grimshaw made a frantic dive for his hat.

"My heavens! I can't stand this, such language is awful—the atmosphere positively contaminating! Farewell, Mrs. Vernon. Since you meet my endeavors in that spirit I must leave you, praying that you may experience a change of heart."

"Do not insult your Maker by daring to address Him from lips and heart so steeped in iniquity as yours, Mr. Grimshaw," said the widow more calmly, "lest your presumption meet its just reward, and you be cut down in the midst of your sin."

A strange expression animated her face, and she raised her hand with a gesture so prophetic that, hard-

ened as he was, the man quailed before her. Pulling out his handkerchief, with a hand that trembled in spite of his effort to steady it, he wiped away the sweat that beaded his brow. Then he turned to leave the room just as the landlady—who had been listening on the outside for the last five minutes—burst in upon them.

“See here, Mrs. Vernon,” she exclaimed, in a loud, coarse voice. “I want my rent, and I’m going to have it. I told you when you took the place that my terms was in advance.”

“You should have been paid promptly, Mrs. Martin, but for an unexpected disappointment with my work,” said Mrs. Vernon sadly. “However, by to-morrow, I can let you have the greater part of it, at least——”

“The greater part,” interrupted the landlady. “I tell you, ma’am, I must have it *all*—right away. Unless you can furnish security,” she added with maliciously significant look at Mr. Grimshaw. “Are you responsible, sir, for——”

“Mrs. Martin,” interposed the gentleman, with his most pompous air. “Nothing affords me greater pleasure than to assist the needy; but in the present case I must decline. You, however, should not be made to suffer in consequence of your tenant’s remissness. I would, therefore, recommend summary ejection, and the retaining of such effects as will indemnify you for the loss you have already sustained;” and, seizing the favorable opportunity, he withdrew.

“And that’s just what I will do,” exclaimed Mrs. Martin. “I’ve waited two days for that money, and I’ll wait no longer! I give you warning to quit by 4 o’clock, or I’ll have you put out,” and leaving the room she bounced angrily down to her own apartments.

The widow tottered back against the wall, and bowed

her face upon her hands. For weeks she had been dreading this and struggling against it; selling article after article, until almost destitute of furniture as well as money. Now the blow had fallen and she was to be driven from the only place that she could call home to go—where?

For a time she stood thus—stunned helpless; then roused by hearing a neighboring clock strike three began to collect what clothing remained from the wreck of her fortunes, together with a small box in which were letters received from her husband and that last fatal missive announcing his death.

All her jewelry and trinkets, save the golden circlet on her wedding finger, and a small locket containing Mr. Vernon's likeness and a tress of his hair on opposite sides, had been parted with long ago.

While engaged in looking over some of her husband's old letters the name of Sophia Pringle met her eye, and sent a feeble thrill of hope and comfort to her fainting heart. Miss Pringle was her husband's half-sister, and lived in a village only about twenty miles distant.

"I will go there," she murmured, resting a moment. "I have just enough to pay the fare on the cars, and I can walk from the station. I will make the effort to reach her, and beg her to receive and care for my helpless child for her father's sake; then I can die in peace."

She finished her preparations, then dressing Rolina, and satisfying her hunger with the only morsel of food that remained in the house, took her hand and led her down the stairs and out to the street, already white with the feathery flakes that had been falling for the last half-hour.

The walk to the depot seemed interminable. The

child's feeble powers failed ere they had gone halfway, and lifting her in her arms the mother toiled on. The short winter afternoon was closing when she reached the depot. A train was in waiting, and getting on board, she sank, half-fainting, upon a seat; while little Rolina, too bewildered even to ask a question or to comprehend anything save that her dear mamma was in some kind of trouble, clasped her arms around her neck and tried by loving words and caresses to comfort her.

The train started and sped on. The conductor had been through, collecting the tickets, and Mrs. Vernon was leaning back in a state of semi-consciousness when there came a crash—a shock—escaping steam—a terrified shriek from the suddenly aroused passengers—a violent lurch sideways—and then oblivion.

When Mrs. Vernon opened her eyes again she was lying upon a bank by the roadside, over which some canvas had been hastily spread. A confused mass of *débris*, moving figures, twinkling lanterns, and the murmur of voices, in which she caught the exclamations—"behind time," "rotten rail," greeted her senses. On one side of the track lay the engine, venting its steam in hoarse puffs like some huge expiring monster. On the other side, between her and the track, lay the wrecked cars beneath which the victims were buried—how many, could not yet be ascertained. Suddenly came the recollection of her child, and raising herself, she strained her eyes around. No trace of her was visible, and she was about to utter a wild cry, when a sturdy voice checked her and a man came forward with some object in his arms.

"Here's the little girl, ma'am. Your shawl saved her—but we had to lift a couple of boards off to find you. You may thank Heaven, though; some others haven't come off so lucky."

Eagerly Mrs. Vernon caught her child to her heart; then rising, found that she could stand, although weak and trembling from the shock; upon which the man hurried off to give assistance elsewhere. She found the satchel lying uninjured, almost at her feet; and as she gazed around, still bewildered, she saw a little distance on the light of a small tavern. With an effort she reached the door, where a man stood surveying the disaster.

"Can you tell me how far I am from E——?" she asked.

"A matter of four miles," the man replied, regarding her with evident surprise. "But you'd better not try it to-night. You've been pretty well shook up in the train, I guess. You can stop here till morning."

"No—no! I must go on while my strength lasts!" gasped the outcast. And she moved on through the snow that chilled her limbs at every step, not daring to pause lest she should sink down in death, leaving her child to perish also. But exhausted nature, weakened by months of unremitting toil, and further debilitated by the recent shock, could hold out very little longer. After going what seemed to her the distance the man had designated, and almost benumbed by the cutting wind and whirling snow, she stopped in front of a cottage from one window of which a light glimmered, intending to ask further guidance. She succeeded in reaching the stoop; then a sudden rushing blackness rose and engulfed her—a roaring sounded in her ears—and she fell forward on the step.

Miss Pringle had been entertaining some friends that evening who had some little time previous taken their departure, and the lady was enjoying her meditations before the fire previous to retiring, when a sound of

sobbing came to her ears, and as it continued her curiosity became excited. Throwing a shawl over her head she went to the front door and opened it.

The rays of the lamp she carried revealed the up-turned features of a little child, sobbing piteously, and pulling at some object with her tiny hands. Stooping down, Miss Pringle discovered that it was a woman's form, face downward, and half-covered in a snowy winding sheet. With an exclamation of astonishment and horror Miss Pringle lifted the child and carried her in, then returning, raised the woman in her strong arms and brought her in also. A few moments sufficed to convince her that life was entirely extinct. The poor homeless wanderer was an outcast no longer.

Having no one to send, and unwilling herself to brave the storm at that hour, Miss Pringle, after quieting the child and finally getting her to sleep, retired. The next day the proper authorities were notified, and the body of Mrs. Vernon consigned to the grave. Ascertaining from an examination of the deceased woman's satchel that the little waif was the child of her step-brother, John Vernon, Miss Pringle received her under her protection, and proceeded forthwith to bring her up in the way she should go.

CHAPTER VI.

MISS GRIMSHAW'S FETE.

"Pleasures are few, and fewer we enjoy;
Pleasure, like quicksilver, is bright and coy;
We strive to grasp it with our utmost skill,
Still it eludes us and it glitters still.
If seized at last, compute your mighty gains,
What is it, but rank poison in your veins?"

—*Young.*

It is a clear balmy evening in June. Every window of the spacious mansion owned by Nicodemus Grimshaw is ablaze with light. On the quiet air strains of music are throbbing with exquisite cadence, and through the trailing curtains of misty lace can be seen graceful forms moving through the dance.

We are once more exercising an author's privilege of dropping back a few months, in order to bring up some scenes and characters that we shall have need of further on.

Everything had prospered with the merchant of late years. Relinquishing to some extent his former line of business in order to give the color of reality to his reputed failure, he had embarked largely in some lucrative shoddy operations. Fortune had smiled upon him, and money had flowed into his coffers. Friends had flattered and rallied around him in increasing numbers, and Nicodemus Grimshaw was a happy man—or ought to have been.

To be sure, after his final interview with the widow of his late partner, he had felt nervous and uncomfortable for awhile. But by giving a few extra dollars to the good cause at large, attending the religious services with unfailing regularity, and exhorting his brethren with renewed unction, he was enabled to forgive that unreasonable and vindictive woman and all the rest of his enemies, and soon succeeded in effacing from his mind that little unpleasantness. Disagreeable reminiscences would, it is true, arise now and then; and had his private chamber been visited by one of those "little birds" so useful in gathering and distributing secrets, it might have reported the existence of a certain closet in which was kept several choice brands of imported liquors, said to be very efficacious in dispelling unwelcome recollections, which, with the help obtained from this source, were finally obliterated to such an extent that they rarely troubled him.

It is the eighteenth birthday of Miss Arabella Grimshaw who, clad in silk and lace, has just whirled nizzily from among the dancers, and leaning against the mantel with languid grace has dispatched her partner to find her fan, left somewhere, she really hasn't the slightest idea where—and who, turning her face toward us at this moment, has given us an opportunity to observe her unnoticed—or to put it more in accordance with the young lady's favorite mode of expression when that most interesting subject, herself, is involved, to worship her at a distance.

This day celebrates also her final and complete emancipation from the schoolroom, together with the dismissal of music, drawing, and dancing masters, tutors, governesses, and the various other humble and subservient, but indispensable, auxiliaries in the work of cutting, polishing, and otherwise perfecting this

social diamond. This day witnesses, furthermore, her formal *début* into society; and with a view of giving due significance to these events, Miss Arabella had preferred the request that this triad of honors might be fittingly signalized by a grand ball.

Mr. Grimshaw was shocked, and at first could only contemplate his daughter with horror and clasped hands. Could he—who had publicly and repeatedly renounced the pomps and vanities of this wicked world, and who never lost an opportunity of raising his voice in virtuous and indignant denunciation of all such vain and frivolous enjoyments—prove recreant to his principles, and permit a *ball* at his house. Perish the thought! The very suggestion was pervaded with an odor of brimstone.

Now this, as it happened, was the first time Arabella had ever been crossed in a pet scheme, and she in turn, stared at her father for a few seconds in speechless amazement; then finally bursting into a passion of angry tears, demanded whether he intended to make a nun of her and done with it! Was she not entitled to enter society with as much *eclat* and distinction as other young ladies?

The irate, but now somewhat mollified parent, regarding his daughter's distress with sympathy and compassion, replied that although conscientiously and religiously opposed to carnal diversions of every description, and especially *balls*, he would oppose no objection to celebrating her birthday by a *fête* in the spacious grounds attached to his residence. There was something, he remarked, eminently romantic, sylvan and refreshing in the idea of a *fête*, suggesting purling brooks, wood-nymphs, and birds—a special inspiration, recently received from the private closet before referred to having given Mr. Grimshaw's mind a poetical,

though slightly incoherent turn—from which, however, he managed to come down to the practical suggestion that refreshments could be served on the lawn.

“And was there to be no band or anything?” Arabella begged to know. “Were they expected to move around like automatons, or some other stupid and lifeless objects, and be shut out of doors all night besides?”

“Oh, by no means! Of course there should be a band, and the company could meet in the parlors, and converse and sing, and, well—*promenade* to the music, and then adjourn to the lawn for the collation.

“That will do, papa,” said Arabella, while her lenient and conceding father, having thus satisfactorily effected a compromise between his daughter and his conscience, retired from the contest.

With this arrangement Arabella was perfectly satisfied, not caring a pin what name was given to the entertainment so that her point was gained; and her gold pencil was soon rapidly making out a list of the names of the large but very select company whose prompt and unanimous acceptance filled the Grimshaw parlors that evening.

Foremost, of course, in interest and importance, is the *débutante* herself; a young lady of medium stature, inclining to *embonpoint*, with good and somewhat piquant features, her hair arranged *à la mode* and adorned with flowers, and her dimpled hands encased in white kids, while her costume is bounded on one side by the edict of Dame Fashion and on the other by the depth of her father’s purse.

Next comes into view the proud and happy father. Clad in glossy broadcloth, his ruffled shirt front sparkling with diamonds, he stands conversing with a guest, and occasionally casting a half-deprecating glance at the dancers.

Mr. Grimshaw, as the reader will remember, had no thought of allowing the festivities to take such a turn—his permission having been strictly limited to a promenade. But Arabella had as firmly resolved in her secret heart not to permit the proficiency she had acquired in the terpsichorean art to be kept in the background on this momentous occasion. Encouraged and abetted by her mother, who, although an invalid and confined to her room for many years, still cherished an undiminished interest in the pomps and vanities of this wicked world, Arabella had proved herself equal to this emergency, and giving her partner and the musicians a hint at the opportune moment, led off the dance.

Words would fail to adequately portray the consternation of Mr. Grimshaw, when on returning to his parlor after a temporary absence his horrified gaze took in the fact that the promenade had resolved itself into a waltz. But the point had been cleverly gained, and remonstrance or interference now would be useless. As well emulate the unsuccessful experiment of sending a second cheese rolling down the hill to bring back the first one already at the bottom. The good man could only look on with dismay, and contemplate the wreck of all that had hitherto distinguished his dwelling from the profane abodes of sinful and worldly men.

With these words of compassion for her unfortunate parent, let us turn to his companion, the Rev. Timothy Simpcox, who with his iron-gray ringlets arranged with faultless precision and an air of exquisite clerical taste prevading his general “make up” has lent the honor of his presence to grace the *fête* given by his friend, patron, and prominent church official, Nicodemus Grimshaw.

And can this gentleman—to whose unsparing denun-

ciation against this and other worldly vanities of a similar kind Miss Grimshaw has listened from her childhood—look unmoved and silent upon this flagrant violation of precepts propounded Sabbath after Sabbath from his velvet-covered pulpit? Fortunately for the undisturbed serenity of Miss Arabella's entertainment, her spiritual instructor possessed a very acute appreciation of the important changes abstract principles undergo when applied to individual cases. In other words, he entertained a very lively consciousness of the desirability of keeping the buttered side of his bread always turned in the right direction when in the presence of one of the men who contributed a liberal share of that oleaginous nutriment. Considerations of this sort, in which gratitude and expediency were harmoniously and successfully blended, sealed his lips, and no sign of disapproval was manifest in his first remark.

"A truly enjoyable occasion and gathering, Mr. Grimshaw."

"Yes—yes!" Mr. Grimshaw spoke a trifle nervously. "My daughter wanted a celebration of some sort, and I made no objection to a little harmless diversion like a *fête*."

"Certainly not, you have a very charming daughter; a *belle* in fact as well as in name; I suppose you will be losing her soon, Mr. Grimshaw. I can only hope that your future son-in-law may prove a fitting relative for yourself whom everybody——"

But we will leave the gentleman to his encomiums, and resume our inspection of Miss Grimshaw. She is carelessly twirling her recovered fan, while she chats with and glances archly at her attendant cavalier. His name is Samuel Jones, and his faultless attire and general appearance would betoken a fashionable exquisite of the very first order, notwithstanding his very

common and unaristocratic cognomen. Could there be anything more exquisite than the air of languid grace with which he is entreating the fair Arabella to grant him a flower—just one—from her corsage bouquet?

“That rose—fitting emblem of its owner,” he pleads, with outstretched hand. “Ah, Miss Grimshaw! surely you cannot be so cruel as to refuse a favor so easily granted?”

“You will not be satisfied until I spoil my bouquet,” retorts Arabella, as she artfully disengages the coveted flower, crushes it in her hand, and lets it fall to the floor. Mr. Jones catches a leaf as it descends, and raising it to his lips with a reproachful glance at his fair enslaver, is about to utter some remonstrance, when at that moment the perfumed air trembles with the cadence of a waltz. Reproach and coquetry are alike forgotten. His arm glides around Arabella’s waist, and down the long room they go, and the ladies who follow in the arms of their partners, form in their varied costumes an ever-shifting kaleidoscope.

In a remote corner stands a slender young man of a pleasing countenance, whose garments, although not new, present an appearance of quiet gentility. His long hair, betraying a tendency to curl, is thrown carelessly back from a high white forehead, and he appears to be surveying the scene with the eye of an artist. And he *is* an artist, with more talent than ready money, just at present; passionately devoted to his profession, and willing to starve, almost, to accumulate means to pursue it. He rejoices in the characteristic name of Scratch.

He has been much amused, during the last half-hour, noting the tones and actions of that stout, red-faced lady, clad in a dress that for brilliancy of color and variety of design is remarkable. Ten years ago she

lived on the fourth floor of a tenement house and took in washing. Her husband, however, fortunately discovered a way to enrich himself at government expense, and now she keeps her carriage and wears jewelry enough for a princess.

In the early part of the entertainment she had been much concerned on behalf of her daughter, who seemed in danger of becoming a wall flower. To her great relief, however, Seraphina was finally asked to dance; and the lady settled herself back with a sigh of infinite satisfaction, saying to her husband in a sort of stage "aside:"

"If Seraphina plays her cards right, she may catch that good-looking young man; and I guess he's rich."

She does not know, as Scratch does, that the gentleman who is conducting Seraphina through the dance, and doing the most of her waltzing, as well as his own, is, despite his air of easy affluence, a notorious fortune hunter at his wits' end for some way to "raise the wind," and inwardly considering "whether this red-haired girl is likely to bring him enough to compensate him for sacrificing himself and his own impecuniosity on the altar of her ugliness?"

Nor does Seraphina know or suspect anything of this unflattering soliloquy; and when at the close of the dance her partner finds her a seat, and then starts off to get her an ice, she leans back in a rapturous flutter at her success in catching that "love of a man—so perfectly elegant."

But a just and considerate regard for the reader's patience will prevent any further detailed description of Miss Grimshaw's guests. It is sufficient to add that the conversation, dancing, and hilarity flowed on in an uninterrupted current, until suddenly a call echoed through the room:

"Gentlemen, will please take partners for the lawn!"

An animated bustle ensues and in a few minutes, each gentleman having selected his partner, the company, forming in line to the music of a march, beat an orderly retreat to the illuminated lawn, on which stand half a dozen magnificent tables, spread with almost every conceivable luxury.

The generous repast disposed of an outdoor promenade follows; then the company return to the parlors, where dancing and other festivities are resumed, until at last they disperse with many good wishes for the prosperity and happiness of the host and his fair daughter.

Two young ladies, at least, sought their pillows that night in a state of blissful content. One, Miss Grimshaw, sank to her well-earned repose, lulled by the self-satisfying consciousness of having succeeded in overruling every one of her father's injunctions, and having her own way absolutely, as she had meant to do from the beginning, and also having made her *début* with quite as much show and parade as any of her young friends and competitors; and the other, it is almost needless to add, was Miss Seraphina.

CHAPTER VII.

A CHARITABLE PROJECT.

“There are, while human miseries abound,
A thousand ways to waste superfluous wealth,
Without one fool or flatterer at our board,
Without one hour of sickness or disgust.”

—Armstrong.

“AH, good-morning, my dear! How do you do? I took the liberty of coming right up, for I feel as if we were already such *very* old friends.”

The dashing, handsomely attired lady bent and kissed with much *empressement* the quiet little woman who had risen from a low rocker to greet her.

Mrs. Ormsby was pronounced by general verdict a very fascinating woman. Rather above the medium height, graceful in figure, with a firm, white skin, well-formed features, a voluptuous mouth; bold, bright, black eyes, shaded by curling lashes, and wavy, luxuriant hair, disposed in a diversity of curls and puffs in compliance with the prevailing mode. Elegantly attired, her white hands sparkling with costly rings, and a mingling of childish impulsiveness and coquettish *abandon* in her manner she was quite irresistible. And it may be added, that, notwithstanding it was eighteen years since her hand had been bestowed in marriage, and her love and fealty pledged to one man “until death did them part,” her line of conquest was as brilliant and unabated as ever.

In marked contrast was the modest little woman who stood replying to inquiries rearding her health and welfare, propounded in that gushing style so universally characteristic of a "very dear friend."

Petite in figure, with luxuriant natural curls rippling back from a sweet, sensitive face, relieved by just a dash of crimson on cheeks and lips, with innocent blue eyes and dimpled chin, she seemed a mere child beside her more fully developed friend; and she was one, as regarded worldly knowledge and experience.

A bride of but a few months, she had come for the first time from her quiet village home to the teeming metropolis. Her husband had taken board at an up-town hotel while looking for a residence that would suit his taste and means, and Mrs. Glenn was, as would naturally be supposed, quite dazzled by the fashion and elegance, the glitter and tinsel of this new phase of life.

On her arrival in town a wealthy cousin, taken with the notion of bringing out a bride, had favored her with a reception. The example was followed by one or two other friends, and then, having gratified their whim, and becoming tired of the new toy, they dropped the young wife, as no longer capable of humoring their caprices in the line of a novelty, and with characteristic consistency directed their attention to discovering some newer and later "sensation."

These attentions served, however, to introduce the young bride to "society" *par excellence*. Prominent among the people she found there was Mrs. Ormsby, who at once manifested a most ardent attachment for the shy little village beauty, elected her forthwith to the position of a bosom friend, and constituting herself her chaperon, promised her further and protracted views of society and its delightful dissipations.

While we have been thus digressing, Mrs. Ormsby

has propounded to her friend various introductory questions respecting her own and her husband's health, and relieved her mind of sundry stereotyped remarks concerning the weather and kindred topics. We now return to them, just as the lady has emerged from this labyrinthian maze, and reached her real errand.

"A committee of ladies and gentlemen are to meet this afternoon, my dear Mrs. Glenn, at our Mrs. Newcome's to discuss a charitable project. I know it will interest you, and I came expressly to take you there with me and make you acquainted with some more of our ladies. You will come, of course?" she concluded, patting her friend's hand patronizingly between her own.

Mrs. Glenn hesitated a moment and looked down.

"Now, you are not going to refuse! I've set my heart upon taking you. Your beauty and talents will make a decided sensation," urged Mrs. Ormsby.

"I would like to go," said the young wife, looking up with a blush and smile. "But Mr. Glenn wants to take me out with him this evening, and I cannot disappoint him."

"Oh, is that all? I will see that you are back in time," laughed Mrs. Ormsby, pulling out her watch.

"It is only quarter after two, now. We meet at three, and my carriage shall set you down again by five. Will that do?"

"Yes, very nicely," Mrs. Glenn answered, rising. "I see nothing to prevent my going in that case."

"Nor I; unless your husband is such a Bluebeard as never to allow you to go out without him." But this time Mrs. Ormsby's laugh, although clear and silvery, somehow grated unpleasantly on her listener's ear. A glance at her merry, piquant face, however, dispelled the feeling for the moment.

"Oh, no!" Mr. Glenn is very good and indulgent to me. I have not had an unhappy hour since I married him—nor shall he have of my making!" she added with unconscious earnestness.

"A commendable resolution," was the gay response. "But hasten, my dear, with your toilet, for my company are in the parlor waiting."

"Company?" repeated Mrs. Glenn. "Who have you with you? Your husband for one, I suppose. I have not seen him yet, you know, and I shall be pleased to make his acquaintance."

It was Mrs. Ormsby's turn to look annoyed for a moment; but she cast it off before it was noticed.

"No, not my husband. One is Colonel Allen, an old beau of mine, and ten times more devoted than ever since he has returned from the war."

"And the other?" said Mrs. Glenn with an expression of mingled embarrassment and hesitation as if half-regretting her promise to accompany her friend.

"My daughter, Bessie. But don't let me delay you by talking. I'll amuse myself with a book until you are ready."

Mrs. Ormsby took up a volume of poems and ran her eyes carelessly over the pages while Mrs. Glenn, after a moment's further irresolution, left the room, and in less than half an hour returned and announced herself ready.

"Why, so you are!" exclaimed Mrs. Ormsby, looking up with manifest relief. "An hour is the very shortest time in which I can make a toilet. But then you have those delightful natural curls that can be fixed in no time instead of my mountain of puffs and braids," and a side glance into the mirror called to the lady's face an expression of perfect self-satisfaction. She then bent a look of approving criticism upon the

quiet elegance of her friend's attire, mentally deciding that she would "do."

Mrs. Ormsby did not know that the young wife was almost unconsciously taking her first lesson in deception. The rich silk and costly set of lace had been her mother's wedding gift, obtained through much self-denial and patient economy on the part of the donor, and had been designed only for rare and special occasions. It had been worn only twice since her wedding day; but a survey of her visitor's sumptuous attire had awakened a desire to be a credit to her chaperon and "society" by presenting herself in a costume as little inferior as possible, and at the same time to give the impression—not exactly a true one—that her husband's means would enable her thus to meet the demands of fashion, and the more inexorable demands of ostentatious charities; and after a brief struggle between vanity and good sense she had yielded to this, her first woman's temptation.

"And now do let us go down at once," said Mrs. Ormsby as she ended her survey. "The colonel will certainly be dying of suspense." She led the way down to the reception room, where Colonel Allen and her daughter had been waiting, entering with her arm around the waist of her friend. The colonel rose and advanced to meet the ladies with Miss Ormsby on his arm.

"Mrs. Glenn, Colonel Allen; Mrs. Glenn, my daughter, Bessie."

"Extremely happy to have the honor of Mrs. Glenn's acquaintance," said the gallant colonel. "And now, ladies, allow me the pleasure of assisting you to the carriage."

Leading the way to the waiting carriage, he placed Mrs. Glenn and Bessie on the back seat, and then

turned to Mrs. Ormsby with an effusive show of gallantry.

"Now, Lady Clara, if you will condescend to share my place on the front seat my happiness will be complete."

Mrs. Ormsby laughingly laid her warm, ungloved hand in his while her dark eyes flashed him a look of coquettish reproof.

"Will your store of flattery never be exhausted, Colonel Allen? I never knew you at a loss for a gallant speech."

"What marvel—inhaling such continual inspiration," retorted the colonel, as he took a seat beside her, "I would be, else, unworthy the happy fortune I enjoy at present."

"There now, not another compliment to-day," protested Mrs. Ormsby, tapping him with her fan. "The best proof of your devotion on this occasion will be to transport us with all possible speed to Mrs. Newcome's. Bessie," she added, turning partly around, "you entertain Mrs. Glenn." Then directing her remarks again to the colonel, "I always enjoy a ride behind your grays, colonel, when you hold the lines. You do make them trot so splendidly, and I am so fond of fast riding. By the way, I have promised Mrs. Glenn that she shall be set down at her hotel at five, so we must keep watch upon the time. We will all ride back with her you see."

"As the queen wills; I am entirely at your disposal for the afternoon, Mrs. Ormsby. You have but to command and I will obey," laughed the colonel.

The gentleman who with such gay gallantry was doing his part in the conversation was undeniably a handsome man. Of a blonde complexion, unspoiled even by the vicissitudes of war; hair, eyebrows, lashes, and

military whiskers of a rich, golden brown, and bold, fearless blue eyes, he was unanimously voted by the ladies "a perfect love of a man," and even bore the somewhat unenviable reputation of a "lady-killer." Witty in repartee, of elegant manners and undoubted gallantry, and—greatest charm of all—unmarried, no wonder that the blonde colonel was a sort of animated magnet that drew with resistless potency those dear and lovely creatures in whose hearts were stored unmeasured depths of those sentiments, whatever they are, that respond to such attractions.

Managing mammas, pretty girls, well-to-do spinsters, and beauty-worshippers generally, surrounded him like so many anglers, with baited lines thrown out to allure this golden prize. New conquests marked his progress everywhere; bright eyes and smiling faces greeted him at every turn. Maidens sighed, and made him the subject of innumerable sonnets in private albums; and despite the cruel expression that at times would tighten around his handsome mouth, and the steely glitter that would waken in his eye, this modern Apollo with his invincible prowess and plenteous conquests in the realm of the "tender passion" might have posed as the very god of love himself.

Among his old acquaintances of twenty years before was Clara Grayson. At that time just released from the thralldom of a country boarding school, not giving promise of much beauty, constrained in manners, and attired invariably in a style of severe simplicity—for her parents were unable to afford her anything more or better—there had been little in the girl to attract the admiration, scarcely the notice of the gay and handsome young man, whose homage was paid only at the shrine of wealth or beauty. Clara had, however, been in his society often enough to awaken in her mind the

desire that she, like other young ladies, might become an object of his especial attention; and when at last she heard that he had left the country for an extended tour abroad, perhaps never to return, the sole sentiment that stirred her heart was wounded vanity—a wish that she could have the power to bring to her feet this prince of handsome men, and make it less easy for him to leave his native land.

One native gift possessed by Clara Grayson—a splendid voice—compensated for want of beauty, grace and wealth, and ere long brought her into general notice, and opened to her the way to the heart and hand of Oscar Ormsby, one of the merchant princes of the city. This alliance placed her at once beyond the reach of poverty and its privations, and afforded her the luxuries and refinements that wealth and affluence secure. When Colonel Allen once more met her in society, it was to find the shy, unformed schoolgirl developed into the fascinating society queen, with a line of conquests almost as long and brilliant as his own. With a thrill of wild, almost fierce exultation, Mrs. Ormsby met his gaze of astonished admiration, and heard his voice, attuned to a cadence of the most deferential regard, acknowledging her merits.

From the renewal of their acquaintance, Colonel Allen became at once her constant attendant and most favored escort. It seemed as though the conqueror's proud head had bent at last to the captive's yoke; and although her husband's name and protection checked much that malicious tongues might have uttered, many were the inuendoes from disappointed ones who beheld their prospective prize borne from them in triumph.

But these and other facts were not at the time known to Mrs. Glenn, on whose ears had been falling that vain, but not unmeaning conversation, which

seemed to her to contain, and scarcely half conceal, thoughts that were turning themselves toward the intimacies of married life, but without the unselfish purity of that sacred relation.

The gay colonel would occasionally turn and address some remark to her, but her brief and formal answers did not encourage him to say anything more than civility demanded. Mrs. Ormsby, also, would occasionally break off from her gay badinage with a repetition of her injunction to her daughter to entertain Mrs. Glenn. But Bessie sat silent, apparently absorbed in thought, and Mrs. Glenn at last became almost as much absorbed in watching her young companion.

Her appearance was exceedingly fragile, her face perfect in its lineaments, and wearing an expression of mingled pride and sweetness. Her dark, soft hair was simply coiled at the back of her head, and her long, taper fingers were just then nervously interlocking themselves in her lap, while the deep, earnest violet eyes, shaded by fringing lashes, were bent upon them. There was an undefined air about her that seemed to bespeak sympathy and affection; and at last, moved by an impulse that she neither could nor would restrain, Mrs. Glenn laid one hand upon that of her young neighbor.

"I feel as if I should love you dearly," she said, softly but earnestly. "May we not be friends? I have none here, beside my husband—and I am so far from home."

Had that little speech been studied instead of *impromptu* it could not have been more effective. Bessie started from her reverie; then as she met that pleading gaze her own eyes grew luminous with feeling, and in another moment the hand of the young wife was clasped with a warm pressure.

"Willingly," she answered, in a low, but no less earnest tone; and obeying the impulse of the moment, both bent simultaneously forward until their lips met.

And just as the friendly compact had been thus ratified the colonel, checking a gay remark to Mrs. Ormsby, brought his team to a halt before an elegant brownstone mansion on Fifth Avenue, the massive silver door plate of which bore the name of Newcome.

The long, double parlors of Mrs. Newcome's town residence were well filled with guests when Colonel Allen and his party stepped into the hall, and Mrs. Newcome, hearing their voices, came to meet them.

"Good-afternoon, Mrs. Ormsby; we had almost given you up. Colonel Allen, I am happy to see you. Bessie, my love, how are you, to-day?" and drawing the young girl to her side, she kissed her with real affection.

"Mrs. Glenn, Mrs. Newcome," said Mrs. Ormsby, presenting her *protégée*. "I have brought Mrs. Glenn with me to-day, as affording an opportunity to make her acquainted among our friends."

"I am very happy to meet Mrs. Glenn," and Mrs. Newcome extended her white jeweled hand, and for an instant held that of the newly introduced guest in a passionless clasp." Walk right upstairs, ladies, please, and lay aside your wraps. You, Colonel Allen, not being burdened with any incumbrance of that kind, may come right in with me." And with her hand on his arm she drew him into the parlor, as Mrs. Ormsby, followed by her friend and daughter, swept up the broad stairs into the apartment already well filled with hats and wraps.

Mrs. Ormsby quickly laid aside her things, glanced at herself in the long mirror, and after giving her dress and hair a few adjusting touches, descended the stairs with her companions.

Mrs. Newcome met the ladies at the parlor door, and drawing Mrs. Glenn's hand through her arm, made the circuit of the parlors, introducing the lady to each guest. And for this becoming and respectful attention to Mrs. Glenn, other good and sufficient reasons also moving us thereto, we deem it right and proper to give Mrs. Newcome a more formal and full introduction to the reader.

Mrs. Newcome, a lady of middle age, could boast a descent as nearly patrician as our republican institutions and sentiments would tolerate. Elegant in manners, accomplished and polished, she moved among her peers with conscious and yet apparently unconscious power and authority. Of medium stature, with clearly defined and handsome features, keen, gray eyes, and a profusion of soft, brown hair, she formed a very attractive picture, viewed from a strictly artistic standpoint, as she moved easily and gracefully through the rooms in her trailing silk robe, with diamonds glittering on her bosom, on her soft, white hands, and sparkling pendant from her shapely ears.

A lavish expenditure of money had secured for Mrs. Newcome the ablest instructors, and her education was not only thorough and substantial, but included many rare and attractive accomplishments. One thing, however, had been overlooked—no attention had been paid to the proper culture of her heart. But for this omission, which under ordinary circumstances would very justly be considered a fatal error, there were fortunately, in the case of this lady, ample compensations—at least so she regarded them. With the very best "blue blood" in her veins, her husband's increasing prosperity magnifying with every year, mistress of an elegant mansion in town, with a residence on the Hudson that was rivalled by no other in the near vicinity—her position

thus secured and confirmed, Power, and its twin, Pride, stood sentinels at the door of her heart, and repelled the intrusion of any more gentle or less aristocratic emotions.

Among those whom Mrs. Newcome accepted as her equals, she was affable, and even familiar, and was regarded by them as a lady remarkable for sweetness of disposition and benevolence of heart. Toward her inferiors, however—those disqualified by untoward fate from pronouncing the shibboleth of worldly success and distinction—none could be more haughtily arrogant, more coldly condescending. Woe to the unfortunate fellow-creature, who, hearing of her benefactions, sought to obtain a sympathetic recognition on the score of intellectual equality alone. All claims of that sort were promptly and imperatively protested. Two very simple and convenient rules served her as guides in all social and moral relations and duties. "Might makes right," and "Wealth makes worth," were the signs on the finger-posts that showed Mrs. Newcome what path to take, and she had never manifested the courage or inclination to try any other road.

With Mrs. Glenn on her arm, the hostess paused before a lady seated at the upper end of the room.

"Mrs. Glenn," she said, "let me present you to Mrs. Morse, one of our oldest and most influential members. This lady is a friend of our Mrs. Ormsby," she added in explanation to the lady in the chair.

Mrs. Morse raised her eyes and surveyed the new candidate for social favor with an air of cool, critical scrutiny, much as one might inspect a new brand of dress goods at Arnolds. She was a large, portly woman of sixty; her features had never been particularly engaging, and now that the adipose matter that surrounded it found it necessary to take refuge in the

formation of a double chin, it served to add heaviness without majesty to her countenance. Her pale blue eyes were small and unsympathizing and a general expression of confirmed stolidity pervaded her countenance.

And yet this lady congratulated herself upon being still a leader and a ruling spirit in society; her influence being, however, for the most part exerted through Mrs. Newcome. She was the "power behind the throne," and came into view only upon extra occasions, when it became necessary or expedient that the actual power should be felt and acknowledged. Mrs. Newcome's reasons for deferring to Mrs. Morse on all questions of social etiquette, and more especially on matters of economy, remained a mystery to many persons; but not so great a mystery to the initiated ones, who knew that Mr. Morse was senior partner in the banking house with which her husband was connected, and had principal control of its operations at home and abroad.

Meantime, Mrs. Glenn had passed safely through the severe ordeal of Mrs. Morse's cold and scrutinizing stare; and her adoption into the charmed circle was ratified and made manifest by a stately and deliberate inclination of the lady's head, and a motion toward a vacant chair standing near.

The hostess now passed into a parlor which, besides its complement of ladies contained a number of gentlemen; and at this point, we will take the liberty to precede her, and afford our readers one more special description.

Bessie Ormsby had entered that room, or rather was conducted there, a few moments previous, and had cast among the assembled guests those quick, nervous glances that bespeak a mind ill at ease. Immediately upon her entrance, a young man who had been leaning

against the mantel, relieving his mind of sundry vampid witticisms for the edification of a group of ladies, caught sight of her, and excusing himself to his companions, came forward as rapidly as his habitual indolence of manner would permit.

An expression of utter aversion swept over Bessie's sensitive face, as she perceived this, and involuntarily she turned her head away. Her repelling glance and averted countenance availed nothing, however. The next moment he was at her side.

"Aw, Miss Ormsby! delighted, I'm sure. Thought cruel fate had decreed to rob us of your presence to-day. Very glad to be so agreeably disappointed. Are you well?"

He had possessed himself of her hand, how Bessie scarcely knew. She withdrew it instantly, and raising her eye with sudden desperation met his full.

And this is what she saw. A man attired in the extreme of fashion, his face wearing beneath an appearance of brainless, insipid, conceit, a look of dogged pertinacity, coupled at the same time with a certain low cunning; lighted by lusterless gray eyes, and adorned with a mustache, and long, yellow English whiskers. His hair, a shade darker, was parted in the middle over a low forehead; and his features, small and effeminate, would have given him an expression of weakness and irresolution, had it not been for the length of chin, denoting that latent self-will which was his only strong characteristic.

One morning, two months before, New York had awakened to a knowledge that it was for the time the favored custodian of a live lord—an English nobleman. At a late hour the previous evening a coach had halted in front of an uptown hotel, and a stranger, attended by a single servant, had alighted, entered, and engaged

a suite of rooms. Waiters were immediately directed to attend to his orders, and in so doing brought in a large, foreign-looking trunk; the stranger at the same time making a brief entry in the hotel register and then sauntering carelessly away to a little distance. In a few minutes more he was shown to his room, and the hotel clerk, as usual, turned the register around and looked at the name traced in a careless scrawl.

"Lord Gordon Gordon and servant—England."

Not very definite, to be sure, but sufficiently so for all present purposes. Like magic the news flew to all parts of the hotel; and when the next morning, after a private breakfast, Lord Gordon descended the hotel steps to enter the barouche he had ordered, fifty pairs of eyes were levelled upon him. Barnum's latest curiosity, however rich or rare, might have been carried by at that moment unnoticed.

His lordship's letter of credit was immediately recognized and honored by the banking house of Morse, Newcome & Co., which letter also served as an introduction to Mrs. Newcome and her dear "five hundred."

From the moment of his introduction to Bessie Ormsby the young lord was smitten. At first, of course, in the lionizing that ensued, he had delighted the hearts of scores of expectant maidens by an impartial bestowal of attentions which, when the excitement had somewhat abated, concentrated themselves on Miss Ormsby; and many were the jealous glances her disappointed compeers cast upon the young lady destined to share the coronet and preside over his lordship's broad estates on the other side of the water.

With a heart beating high with gratified ambition, Mrs. Ormsby had observed these attentions. An alliance with nobility had been the one desire of her heart, and she at once and secretly determined to leave

no measure untried that would be likely to aid in bringing about that much wished for consummation.

And Bessie? The moment she was brought near to the reputed lord, that innate perception that is given to every true woman detected the fraud. Not a single redeeming trait did he possess in her estimation, and it was only with a great effort and in view of the filial duties and obligations she believed to be due to the known wishes of her mother, that she could receive with any degree of toleration his attentions.

Mrs. Ormsby, watching them both with the keenest interest, noted her daughter's sentiments. A conference followed the result of which was that Bessie was enjoined, at all hazards, to secure this golden prize; and for awhile she allowed herself to drift along in a sort of tacit acquiescence, but her young heart could not respond to the unnatural effort that was wearing her soul and wasting her life.

With her eyes upon her interrogator's face, a look of mute entreaty coming up from their depths that would have enlisted the pity of a heart that retained even one generous emotion, Bessie stood for a moment. Then the pale lips moved in answer to the question, and in mockery to the words they formed.

"Yes, I am well, Lord Gordon, thank you. As well as usual."

The sinister look which the mention of his title never failed to bring, shone in his eyes, at that moment, but his manner betrayed no other change.

"Delighted to hear it, Miss Ormsby, I'm sure. I knew you would be here unless detained at home by indisposition. But you have not yet paid your respects to the 'Duchess.' Allow me."

He offered his arm which Bessie accepted mechanically, and led her up to Mrs. Morse, who greeted her

with some real affection, and awarded her the seat of honor on her right. Lord Gordon secured a seat near, and endeavored to make himself agreeable with an abundance of society small-talk, and an occasional allusion to the difference in the arrangement of matters here, and "at 'ome."

"And now, ladies, if you please," spoke Mrs. Newcome, "we will proceed to business. I nominate Mrs. Ormsby as president, *pro tem.*"

"Allow me to decline, in favor of Mrs. Morse," said Mrs. Ormsby promptly. There was just the least bit of rivalry between the two ladies, and as the president was restricted to acting the pleasure of the rest, Mrs. Ormsby did not care to enjoy that distinction at the price of withholding her voice in the discussion. Mrs. Morse was therefore unanimously elected and Mrs. Newcome rose a second time.

"Our meeting this afternoon, ladies, is to devise means to raise funds for a very deserving charity. I can give you a better idea, perhaps, by reading from the circular letter that has called us together.

"This institution, the 'Refuge for the Desolate,' now in its third year, is designed for the support and training of destitute and parentless children, of whom our city contains such large numbers, left to perish in infancy, or drag out a miserable existence. From such a fate, this institution, founded on the broad principles of charity and love to the neighbor, aims to rescue them. N. B. No children will be admitted who are known to have been born out of wedlock."

A refuge for the desolate, truly, with its corner stone Charity, and yet shutting its doors with parisaical self-righteousness against the most desolate of God's creatures. The little innocent, thrust upon the world through no act or sin of its own, forever exiled from

love, sympathy, even human compassion; left to wear on its unsullied brow a brand of guilt not its own, is to cower through life with no helping hand for body or soul; an alien, a stranger, although the child of our Father whose will it is that not one of these little ones perish. Verily the tender mercies of society, like those of the wicked, are cruel.

The reading elicited no comment, save an involuntary sigh from Mrs. Glenn, who had listened attentively.

"This institution," continued Mrs. Newcome, "is managed by ladies, and supported by voluntary contributions. The demands on our charity are great, and constantly increasing. We need a much larger and more commodious building, and I have pledged my influence toward raising funds for the purpose. This, ladies, is the whole story, now what plan would you suggest for raising the money?"

"I propose a fair," said Mrs. Gray. "Fairs always succeed, and you can charge what you please."

"It takes too long to prepare," objected Mrs. Lyons. "Besides, you are never sure of the articles being all equally salable."

"That is true," said Mrs. Richards. "I would suggest a raffle for a painting, or a set of volumes, or something of the sort. That is my idea."

"A raffle is too much like a lottery, and my husband I know would not consent to my having anything to do with it," said Mrs. Brinsley. "Why not have a fancy-dress ball or a masquerade?"

"That does not exactly suit my fancy," said Mrs. Newcome. "I should think a *soirée* or concert would be best."

"I think, Mrs. President, that none of the ladies have exactly hit the mark as yet," said Mrs. Ormsby,

rising. She had been conferring with Colonel Allen for the last few moments. "The most feasible plan, in my view, which will involve very little cost, and consequently afford us larger profits, is—private theatricals."

The company held its breath for a moment, and then several exclaimed simultaneously:

"The very thing! What a clever idea, Mrs. Ormsby."

"We could have music before and after, and so afford variety to the entertainment," continued Mrs. Ormsby. "What does Mrs. Newcome think of it?"

"A very good idea," replied that lady, as soon as she could get over her private chagrin at being again forestalled by Mrs. Ormsby, and having her carry off the palm for the suggestion. "And perhaps we cannot do better than to adopt it. But what piece shall we select?"

"I suggest a fairy transformation scene," said Mrs. Gray, in whose mind an evening at the "Black Crook" had awakened a taste for similar representations. "That will be pretty and afford an opportunity for a good many characters."

"It is not essential to have too many," remarked Mrs. Ormsby, a trifle haughtily. "Besides, scenes of that sort have been made so common by being dragged through these third-class theaters, that they are quite out of the question. Let us have a good, sterling English comedy, or none at all."

"Some of Shakespeare's comedies are good, if only we could be sure of doing justice to them," remarked Mrs. Newcome.

"Or there is the 'Loan of a Lover,' suggested Mrs. Richards, with a glance at the colonel.

"Or 'Our American Cousin,' supplemented a disappointed mamma, with a look askance in the direction of the young lord.

"They will not do," said Mrs. Ormsby, with an authoritative wave of her hand. 'She Stoops to Conquer' is much the best. I have read portions of it at times, and have been highly complimented upon my rendering of *Miss Hardcastle*."

"Egad! I should like to play *Marlow* to that *Kate*!" said the colonel in an undertone.

"And so you shall," responded Mrs. Ormsby in the same key. "Mrs. President, I move that we select for our entertainment Goldsmith's comedy, 'She Stoops to Conquer.'"

The motion was seconded by Lord Gordon, and the vote was unanimous.

"I move that Mrs. Ormsby select the cast," said Colonel Allen. That motion was also seconded and carried, and Mrs. Ormsby rose with a flush of triumph on her cheeks.

"Very well; listen then, *Mrs. Hardcastle*—Mrs. Newcome. *Marlow*—Colonel Allen; *Constance*—Bessie Ormsby; *Hastings*—Lord Gordon, and the others I will announce next week. And—oh, I beg pardon—you Mrs. Glenn, will take a character, and favor us also with some music, won't you? Thanks," as Mrs. Glenn mechanically inclined her head. "And I propose that we leave the other arrangements as to time and place in the hands of Mrs. Newcome."

The motion was put and carried, and Mrs. Newcome arose.

"I will announce my decision at our next meeting. And I move now, that we close our session by a little entertainment. Mrs. Ormsby, you are our Nilsson; will you favor us?"

Mrs. Ormsby drew out her jeweled watch.

"I am very sorry, Mrs. Newcome, but I must ask to be excused this time. It is now the hour at which I

promised to return Mrs. Glenn to her hotel. At our next meeting, however, we will both be happy to comply." Then turning to Lord Gordon, she continued: "Allow me to consign my daughter to your lordship's care. Will you drive her home?"

"With many thanks for the privilege," Lord Gordon answered, rising and bowing.

Mrs. Glenn had risen to join her friend, and glancing backward, caught the expression of mute entreaty in Bessie's eyes, as she lifted them for a single instant to the face of her mother. Her heart interpreted the glance aright, and tears filled her eyes as she bowed to her hostess and retired.

The carriage was waiting as they descended the steps, and in twenty minutes more Mrs. Glenn was returned to her hotel. Passing up to her own room she threw herself on a sofa, her eyes filling with tears, and her heart throbbing with a dull, uneasy pain.



THE "MADAME."

CHAPTER VIII.

COMPANIONS IN MISFORTUNE.

THE contrast between wealth and poverty, as well as the gradual transition from one to the other, is observable alike in localities and in the people who inhabit them.

Any one who has been familiar with the history of New York for the last fifty years, can look up and down almost any great thoroughfare or business street, and name the leading changes that have taken place in that locality from year to year, down to the present time. In most cases, perhaps, the changes have marked gradual, and sometimes rapid, transitions from comparative poverty to wealth, luxury and refinement; and sometimes—and not so infrequently as the stranger might imagine—these changes indicate movements in an opposite direction. Palatial residences, still standing, are sometimes shown, with their large, imposing entrances, massive oaken doors, broad, marble steps, wide and spacious halls within, with their heavy sliding doors, and large and elegant rooms, with their walls and high ceilings painted and frescoed. These, and other costly ornaments and decorations of olden time, including, in many instances, richly carved furniture still remaining, imported at prices far above what wealthy people are paying now, are the signs and marks by which some old mansions tell of other and better days, while in their present actual use they occupy the rank of second-class lodging houses.

Instead of the beaux, dames and demoiselles, gay, proud, and at the upper verge of fashion, who went in and out of some old house, fifty years ago, we may now, perhaps, see coming down the marble steps, some poor reporter, whose stock in trade comprises a wooden pencil and four cents' worth of writing paper; his sole hope of escaping the dire necessity of going supperless to bed, and receiving as a substitute for his breakfast, a peremptory notice to leave immediately, being merged in and sustained by the possible chance of hearing a private conversation on the streets, out of which a sensational story may be concocted that will bring him twenty shillings. Or some poor sewing girl, with pale, pinched cheek and scanty attire, having made a hasty meal on what cost her fourteen cents—all she could afford, and rather more than usual—comes out and hastens to the workroom of the fashionable Madame Modiste.

At a somewhat later hour, an actress—member of a stock company, but whose place is filled just now by some one else—comes out from the old mansion, so grand and gay in other days. She is looking for a possible engagement, while at the same time cherishing the delightful and inspiring consciousness that for a few hours, at least, she will have surcease from the grating voice of Madame Dolinaire, dunning for her room rent. At last the *danseuse* and ballet girls pass out, wending their way to their appointed places, where their mission is to make other people cheer and laugh, that with the little money thus earned they, and others dear to them, may be spared the necessity that otherwise must doom them to weep and mourn and starve.

When the afternoon sun throws his rays aslant, and down the high-walled streets, inviting all to come and bask in his genial beams, and while the sons and

daughters of fashion go forth to give and receive that grateful admiration which is not entirely a worthless boon, another, who shall be nameless here, issues from the broad doors that open to those ancient marble halls. Powder, paint, and gay attire, with flaunting airs and movements, say as plain as words can speak, "You see I also am here to-day." While men and brothers—some lovers, too—are saying in their thoughts, and more than half-inclined to say in open words, to the fair ones beside them, "How much better you would look, if in dress, manner, and appearance much further removed from her toward whom you have glanced at just long enough to see if you could catch our gaze turned in that direction."

Pass on, young men. This is not the hour nor place for turning such thoughts into words. Some other time it may be well to mention to the fair ones whom you love, that while to the practiced eye virtue and vice are always clearly distinguishable by certain subtle tokens of dress and manner, it is at the same time much better to make the distinction broad enough to be seen and noticed by the casual observer.

Not very far from the corner of Bleecker Street and East Broadway, stood at the time of our narrative a house distinguished from the adjoining buildings by a sort of decayed grandeur, evidences of wealth and aristocracy in the long ago. On one of the Corinthian columns supporting the once imposing doorway might have been seen a paper slip, on which was written the words: "A furnished room and bedroom to let to gentlemen of *undoubted* respectability." The word, *undoubted* being boldly underscored, to avoid the annoyance of receiving applications from any not prepared to meet that requirement.

What, the reader may desire to ask, is the peculiar

qualification intended to be understood by that word? What class of persons would be required to vouch for the undoubted respectability of the applicant? His own vouchers, curious reader, will be received in every instance, if they come in the shape of enough money to pay his rent, "undoubted respectability" being simply a mild and genteel form of saying: "If you come here, pay in advance, and leave when your money is gone."

Oh, how the rain and sleet poured down on that dismal evening, when, led by her new guardian, Rolina Vernon ascended the old, long-worn marble steps. Letting himself in with a night key, McCready passed up four flights of stairs, closely followed by his little *protégée*. Two small rooms, and one a trifle larger, comprised the living and lodging places of McCready and two friends, Scratch and Brown, with the present addition of a sick comrade.

The room they entered was scantily supplied with furniture of an antiquated type. On one side was a sofa, and on the other, a chair or two, a small table, and several battered trunks whose better days had long since been relegated among things that were.

A small stove warmed the place, its greasy appearance denoting its constant service in the culinary line. On one side stood an easel, containing an unfinished picture, before which the artist still sat, as if loth to leave it, although night precluded further progress. Seated beside a low, improvised mantel shelf on which burned a couple of small bright lamps, sat a seedy looking individual, with a portfolio on his knee, scribbling away for dear life. And on the bed in one of the inner rooms, the door of which stood open, lay the emaciated form of a man in the last stages of consumption.

Up jumped the artist, away went the scribbler's notes, and the sick man raised himself eagerly on one elbow, as our hero entered with his companion.



"WHAT UNDER THE SUN HAVE YOU THERE, MCCREADY?"

"What under the sun have you there, McCready?" queried the artist, bending a look of kindly scrutiny upon the little stranger. "A model for my next picture?"

"Hush Scratch—you will frighten her," McCready answered; for bewildered, and half dismayed by her novel surroundings Rolina was trembling violently, and her eyes brimming with tears. "She is a poor little creature that I stumbled upon up near mother's place, without home or friends; so I couldn't——"

"Couldn't help adopting her, of course," finished the scribbler. "I verily believe, McCready, that if you shall fall heir to a fortune to-morrow you would have half a dozen orphan asylums founded within a fortnight. But what are you going to do with her? To people in our circumstances isn't it somewhat like drawing the elephant?"

"I don't know but it is," McCready replied, joining in the laugh, "the plain truth is, I haven't had time yet to ponder the subject properly. At any rate we'll manage somehow to take care of her for a few days, until I can find a public institution of some sort which is less of a humbug than those places generally are, and where she will stand a reasonable chance of being properly cared for. Meanwhile, we must not annoy her with questions until she feels more at home. Come and sit here by the fire, little one," he added, urging Rolina gently forward, and giving her hand a reassuring pressure. "You have had a long, cold ride. And you, Brown, scare us up a little supper, that's a good fellow."

"I can't promise any very appalling scare," laughed the scribbler. "Don't be afraid of us, little girl," he added, kindly laying his hand for a moment on one of Rolina's, as McCready turned away. "We will be

your friends, all of us, and make it as comfortable for you as we can."

Glancing timidly up, Rolina met his friendly gaze, and her tears gave place to a faint smile. Patting her approvingly on the shoulder, Brown turned to his task, while McCready, entering the smaller room, seated himself on the side of the patient's low bed.

"How are you feeling to-night, Harcourt—better?"

"I shall never be better, McCready," the sick man answered, laying his almost transparent hand on that of his friend. "I have faced the footlights for the last time. In a few hours I shall be gone."

"I don't think it is as bad as that, old fellow," urged McCready. "You do not seem any weaker than you were yesterday."

"I grow weaker every hour," said the invalid. "Weaker in body, but stronger in spirit," he added earnestly. "My real life, McCready, has not been all mere froth. I do not go hence without hope. I know in whom I have trusted."

"Hold fast that trust, Harcourt, as your earthly prospects fade," said his friend fervently. "It has lighted many a soul across the dark river. If you must go, dear fellow, God bless you, but we shall miss you sadly."

"You will watch with me to-night, McCready?" said the patient, after a brief silence. "I feel that it will be my last, and I want to see your friendly faces around me."

"Certainly," answered McCready, pressing his hand. "All that we can give you, you shall have, dear friend."

"God bless you, McCready," murmured the invalid. "You have been true and faithful friends to me, but my gratitude is all I can leave you."

"Ample payment, Harcourt," said the actor, gently

smoothing his friend's pillow. "We have no books to balance."

Meanwhile the *cuisine* had progressed rapidly. Our artist friend, knife in hand, had been, as he put it, "denuding certain members of the 'murphy fraternity,'" "while Brown had produced from the *cellar*—located for convenience under the foot of the patient's bed—a bundle of wood, and from a small cupboard, a frying pan, and was soon involved in the grease and mystery of sausage cookery.

The meal prepared and eaten, the utensils were once more stowed away. The sick man was then propped up in a comfortable position, and Brown resumed his pen, while Scratch and McCready sat quietly talking. Rolina sat on a low bench beside her friend, her head on his knee, fast asleep—such was the picture of contented poverty to be seen on that stormy night in the garret of that once palatial mansion.

But a calm affords no proof that a storm is not imminent. Ten, twenty, sixty minutes pass. The scribe is still busy, Rolina asleep, and McCready dozing. The invalid has been breathing heavily, as if each breath was drawn with greater effort, when a sudden convulsive struggle, with a hoarse gasp and an effort to speak, arrest the attention of his friends, and all spring instantly to his relief.

But he is past relief before they reach him. Life is extinct—his earthly rôle is ended. The favorite actor, whose lively humor and brilliant wit in bygone days had afforded amusement to many thousands, has made his final exit from mundane scenes, in that dingy garret, with no one near save the few friends who have shared their poverty with him.

Alas for those whose strongest hold on public sympathy is derived from the ability they once had to min-

ister to the enjoyments of the passing hour. Their names may find a place upon the roll of fame after they are gone; but in the hours and days when poverty brings sorrow, woe, want and death, they are seldom thought of.

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There was a corpse in the house. A late occupant of that old mansion slept his last sleep, and the emblem of death must be hung on the door knob, so that all who passed by might be admonished to tread softly and speak low

"Farewell, old friend," McCready murmured, as he bent over the lifeless form and gazed upon the placid features. It seemed as if, during the night, the death angel had paid a second visit, and with gentle hand smoothed all traces of pain from the still face of their friend, leaving only the most peaceful expression to greet the eyes of those who had loved him.

"He went off suddenly," remarked Brown. "We did not anticipate the end so soon."

"No; I had expected some farewell words," said McCready. "But it is all over now. We can only murmur '*requiescat in pace*,' and commit his body to the earth with such ceremonial as our humble means will permit."

Ill news travels swiftly. Before any of her garret lodgers had left their room that morning, the "madame" had in some way become apprised of the decease. She immediately flew into a towering rage at the idea that a person so humble and impecunious should presume to draw his last breath in her aristocratic lodging house; and she flew upstairs, cap streamers fluttering, and pushing open the door, *sans ceremonie*, stood gazing upon the scene of the disaster.

Standing there, a person of middle age with some-

what greater lateral than perpendicular development, with angry countenance, arms akimbo, and hands clinched, she looked not unlike an Amazon, eager for the fray, but uncertain just how to strike in. Unmoved and undeterred, the trio continued their labors of love, apparently unconscious that their departed comrade had done anything that ought to arouse the ire of the avenging "Nemesis" on the threshold. A sheet was drawn tenderly over the silent face, and then, as if moved by a common impulse, each looked at the other with the mute but forcible suggestion: "Who will be called next?"

But on one person the impressive scene produced no softening effect. As the sudden storm interrupts the quiet serenity of a summer day, the "madame's" angry and most untimely outburst of passion dispelled, for a moment, the kindly cherished and gratifying remembrances of the one now lying silent before them.

"Mr. McCready, what does this mean?" exclaimed the angry woman, with a grandiloquent flourish toward the bed.

McCready turned his serious face toward her, as he spoke with truly dramatic, because genuine, emotion, the impressive words:

"It means *death*, madame."

The quiet reply only augmented her wrath.

"I should think it did! I can see that for myself. I should like to know what right he had to die in *my* house?"

"The right vouchsafed every creature to yield his departing breath when and wheresoever his Creator calls for it," was the quiet response.

"My house shall not be turned into a morgue for one like him. If he had been respectable——"

"Meaning, I suppose," interrupted McCready, "if he

had possessed means to hire your parlor floor and live and die in style, instead of passing the last months and moments of his weary life in your garret. Ah, madame, you judge of worth from a sordid standpoint."

But madame was proof against sentiment, and scarcely waited for McCready's answer.

"I say it is preposterous, Mr. McCready. When he knew he was going to die, it was his business to go to some hospital, or to the island, and not stay here to damage the reputation of my house——"

Up to this time, Rolina had been a silent and distressed spectator of the scene, but sitting back out of sight, had not been noticed by the landlady. It was the first time she had been brought so close to the great mystery of death, and to her active imagination the place seemed peopled by supernatural beings—the dread guarded by unseen attendants. The landlady's harsh and vituperative accents, breaking in upon the silent sanctity of the occasion, became painful beyond endurance, and moved by an irresistible impulse, she rose, advanced, and gently turning down the sheet from the lifeless face, raised her hand with a deprecating gesture.

"If you please, ma'am, he is *dead*!"

The madame's countenance could not have assumed a look of greater consternation had the shock of an earthquake broken in upon the scene. Staring wildly and furiously at the little figure standing beside the dead man, as if to shield him from further calumny, she exclaimed:

"Mr. James Brutus McCready, I demand to know what *this* trollop is doing here! Such conduct is outrageous—scandalous! You will quit my house at once."

How much longer the "madame" might have con-

tinued her invectives, it is impossible to say, for our artist friend, who had been eying the irate dame with unusual interest and had been arranging a mental sketch with her as the central figure—now feeling that matters had reached a climacteric predicament, quietly took the lady by the arm, and putting her forcibly to the “right about” escorted her over the threshold, and closed and locked the door.

Though loud in her denunciations, the enraged woman had enough discretion to know that any further hostile demonstrations now would only make matters worse; so she withdrew from the unequal contest, valorous still, but discreet.

Death, in whatever form it comes, always brings present and living issues that must be met. It brings rest, it is true—at least to the body of him whom it takes away; but upon the survivors it devolves other immediate cares and duties that must be met and discharged, however much their weary and sorrowing hearts may need peace and rest.

The three friends, now left alone, began to realize the necessity for prompt and immediate action, and proposed a counsel.

“I move,” said Brown, “that Brother J. B. McCready be our chairman.”

“I second that motion,” said the artist, and forthwith conducted the newly chosen official to the post of honor—an old armchair, whose springs, disdaining the covering that had once protected them, now pertinaciously insisted upon bringing their spiral forms into very objectionable prominence. How often it happens that positions of distinction fail to furnish the enjoyments they were expected to afford. Even the chair of state seems never to be quite at rest, but rather as if awaiting a favorable opportunity to “bounce” its occupant,

thus affording a continual illustration of the maxim: "Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown."

The scribe was made secretary, by a vote of two to none; and the organization was completed by the chairman assuming the appointing power, and assigning to the artist the post of treasurer.

The next step in order was to examine the effects of the deceased, and ascertain the condition of his finances, and also whether he had left any written directions for the disposal of his property. Opening his trunk, they carefully removed each article, until it was nearly empty, without discovering anything of real value. There remained only an old, well-used book, and each eye was dimmed at the sight of the relic. With reverent hands the volume was raised, and McCready opening it, read on the flyleaf the words: "A mother's gift to her only son," and beneath, in the same delicate hand, the injunction—"My son, attend to my words; incline thine ear unto my sayings."

Some papers were inclosed in an envelope, and upon taking them from between the leaves it was found that those pages recording the life and sufferings of the world's Redeemer were blurred and stained as with tears; showing how often he, whose merry antics had provoked the careless mirth of thousands had, when away from the applause of men, drank to his soul's satisfying the melting and comforting story of redemption.

It is an error to suppose that those who by the exigencies of life are devoted to professions that minister to superficial amusement have reserved no place in their hearts and thoughts for those earnest and solemn realities that take hold upon a better life.

"To my friends," read the inscription on the envelope

"What have we here?" exclaimed McCready, as he

broke the seal. Into his hands fell five new, unused, one-hundred-dollar bills, and a sheet of paper carefully folded. Opening the document, he read:

"My last instructions to my friends.

"Feeling that my days will soon be told, I have my dear friends, a few requests to make. My mother's grave was the last in her family plot; and in her dying hour she asked and received my solemn promise that I would be laid by her side. With a small sum I secured a lot adjoining hers, the remainder of the purchase money to be paid within a period that has not yet expired. In times of prosperity I laid aside this sum to complete the purchase, and defray other necessary expenses at my death. This sum neither want nor sickness has induced me to disturb. To you, dear friends, I intrust the fulfillment of this charge; and any surplus that may be left retain for yourselves as a slight testimonial of my gratitude for your unwearying kindness and attention.

"Further, having been baptized in the church of which my parents were members, it is my desire to be buried under the same ceremonial with them. If I have wandered from the teachings of that church, she will surely receive me back, so far, at least, as to give me Christian burial.

"Lastly, dear friends, receive my heartfelt blessing on your affectionate and unwearied care, and accept also, as a final memento, my mother's gift—this Bible—the most precious relic I can bequeath you. And when the sod covers my mortal remains from your sight let your prayers follow my undying spirit."

"To my sincere and devoted friends James B. McCready, Julius Brown, and August Scratch."

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This was the actor's last will and testament.

CHAPTER IX.

THE LAST OF EARTH.

"We all must die,
All leave ourselves, it matters not where, when,
Nor how, so we die well: and can that man that does so
Need lamentation for him?"

—*Beaumont and Fletcher.*

AFTER reading the document, the three friends sat silent for some minutes. Then McCready, turning to his companions, remarked:

"This must be what he was writing the last day he was able to sit up. Poor fellow! he shall have a decent burial. The pledge he suffered so much rather than break shall be sacredly kept by us, his executors, and he shall rest beside his best and dearest friend—his mother."

All were once more silent, for each heart was more than full; then choking down his emotions, McCready spoke again:

"We will have some breakfast now, for our little friend here must be hungry, and then we will decide who shall attend to this business."

"That is very readily decided," remarked Brown. "You knew him best, McCready and are of a kindred profession. You are the proper person for that task."

"Very well," answered McCready, quietly; adding, with a faint smile; "our worthy landlady may have a little more respect for poor Tom when she learns that his body is not destined to fill a pauper's grave."

The hastily prepared breakfast was soon disposed of, and then McCready sent out, going first to the residence of the doctor who had been called in during Harcourt's illness as often as the slender finances of his friends justified the luxury of medical attendance. Now the doctor was wanted only long enough to enable him to fill out a certificate saying, what all knew, that the deceased had died of pulmonary consumption—and to write also a receipt for five dollars, paid him by McCready in return for that official indorsement.

It has been said, whether justly or not, that certain ceremonies attendant upon the removal of men and women from this world have been arranged with special reference to enabling the persons who conduct these ceremonies to get as much as they possibly can of whatever fortune the deceased may have left, and a liberal share, also, of any spare cash the surviving relatives or friends may happen to possess. It is more, sometimes, than genteel persons of moderate means can do to run the gauntlet of the doctor, undertaker, florist, and a dozen others and get out of the world in a respectable way. Of course one does not like to have any disparaging remarks made after he is gone in regard to any parsimony evinced in his final exit from mundane scenes; and thus is often displayed that ruling passion which not only remains strong in death but some time after it.

The next visit brought McCready into the presence of the undertaker, a somewhat pompous and important functionary in this instance, as it happened. At first he was received with indifferent politeness, his seedy attire not giving promise of a particularly remunerative job. The undertaker's manner changed, however, to the most obsequious attention when he was made acquainted with the directions that had been given by

the deceased in regard to his burial, and the amount of money he had left to be used for that purpose.

"If you will allow me, I will attend to everything, sir," he said, when McCready mentioned the desired plot. "At an occasion like this friends wish to be relieved as far as possible from all responsibility and have leisure to indulge their emotions. Have you the number of the plot?"

McCready produced the memorandum inclosed in Harcourt's envelope.

"Ah—yes! how very thoughtful and methodical, to be sure. Well, leave it all with me—all with me, sir. You will have flowers, of course?"

"A few," McCready replied, quite bewildered by the undertaker's sudden volubility. "Also I suppose you can direct me to a church where——"

"Oh, certainly," interrupted the undertaker, scenting an additional fee. "I will assume charge of that department also with pleasure. I am intimately acquainted with the Rev. Dr. Simpcox, having been sexton of his church the last fifteen years. I will send my boy to notify him of the solemn occasion and I can answer for him that he will be happy to officiate."

He concluded his speech with a profusion of bows, and an expression of feature that might have been taken for a cross between a smile of joy and a grimace of sadness, but was really a professional expression peculiar to him, and intended to indicate something or nothing or anything whatever, according to circumstances.

Fully satisfied at last with the result of his errand, McCready bowed himself out, and hastened home to hold the last sad vigil.

Two hours later a fine span of black horses in silver mounted harness, attached to a shining black wagon,

bearing on a silver side plate the name "Ezekiah Musty, Sexton & Undertaker," drew up before the door. Jumping down from his perch the little man ascended the steps, unrolling from a paper parcel the long crape streamers, and ringing the bell with a peculiar jerk, proceeded, while waiting admittance, to tie the emblem of mourning on the knob.

The door being opened, Mr. Musty lifted his hat and wiped his boots in a very professional sort of way, and inquired for Madame Blowover; the girl, meanwhile, toying with the corner of her apron, and glancing askance at him with mingled awe at the solemn nature of his errand, and admiration at his elegant get up. Having shown him into the parlor she went to inform the madame, who soon made her appearance with her most engaging expression, and was of course received with Mr. Musty's professional smile, to which a few variations and accompaniments were added for that occasion.

"My charming Mrs. Blowover, what is the state of your health at this time?" inquired the undertaker, who was not an entire stranger to the buxom widow.

"Excellent in body, Mr. Musty, but perturbed in mind;" and the lady sighed, as if her trials and tribulations were more than she could endure.

"Sad occasion, madame, the death of Mr. Thomas Harcourt. I have the management of his obsequies." And the little man's eyes twinkled.

"Allow me to say, Mr. Musty; that it is a sad occasion for the reputation of my establishment. Instead of going to the hospital——"

The puzzled smile on her visitor's face evidently arrested her stream of eloquence, for she suddenly paused and waited for him to speak.

"My dear Mrs. Blowover, a man possessed of five

thousand dollars is not likely to surrender himself to the tender mercies of a charitable institution." The worthy undertaker had moved the five one place further to the left—nothing more.

"Five thousand fiddlesticks!" In using that contemptuous expression, the lady had permitted herself to be shaken down perceptibly from the high altitude of propriety that she generally maintained.

"True, madame. At first I could scarcely credit it, until the manner of the person who called upon me convinced me of its truth. Can I see the body now?"

"Certainly—certainly." The same magic key had touched a secret spring in that ossified structure misnamed heart that reposed in the widow's bosom; and rising with alacrity she led the way upstairs, and very gently knocked upon the door of the garret room.

McCready opened it, and led the way to the bedside. There had been a memorable change in the sentiments of the madame since that short interview downstairs, and she actually stooped and kissed the cold brow of the sleeper, while Mr. Musty, contemplating the touching scene, gave his eyes a professional wipe, ere proceeding to measure poor Tom Harcourt for his narrow home.

"Poor dear man!" sobbed the landlady. "Who would have thought this, a few years ago!"

"True, madame. When poor Tom, then in perfect health, and at the zenith of his fame, loaned you money to start this establishment because your late husband had once done him some kindness which he remembered so liberally," interposed McCready.

Mrs. Blowover turned upon the actor a flushed and excited countenance.

"But I paid him back, every cent! I have his receipts to prove it."

"He was a friend to you when you needed friends," said Brown softly.

"A friend in need is a friend indeed!" supplemented Musty, who realized the importance of doing his share of the talking on all occasions.

"True, Mr. Musty; and no doubt in his last bequests Mr. Harcourt has not forgotten his old friends," said the madame feelingly. "When he first came to New York he found a shelter under my roof. I have followed his career from year to year; and now in his final departure I sincerely hope he has not forgotten his old friends!" And overpowered by her own eloquence, Mrs. Blowover subsided, swaying back and forth in a rocking chair, and meanwhile serenely and obliviously mopping her face with her ruffled white apron.

"Depend upon it, madame, he has remembered all his surviving friends as became his ability," McCready said in a tone full of quiet significance.

"Just like dear old Tommy," and the lady sobbed and mopped with renewed vehemence.

Mrs. Blowover was now ready to render any needed assistance, and waited awhile to see if there was anything she could do, even condescending to stroke the head of the "trollop," who had stolen up to the bedside. But becoming conscious at last that she was exactly one more than was wanted, with many expressions of sympathy and regard, she took her way downstairs closely followed by Musty. Reaching the parlor door, she invited him to come in and rest awhile longer.

As we have already intimated, Mr. Musty was not an entire stranger to the widow. He had, moreover, been on a certain occasion, considerably smitten with her charms, although lacking requisite courage to lay siege to her heart. But now, in her own parlor, with

the buxom widow seated in close proximity to him, her bosom heaving with sympathetic sighs, and one plump hand raising her handkerchief every few minutes to her eyes, was it any wonder that his long-smothered passion could brook no further restraint.

A respectful consideration for their feelings prompts us to draw a veil over the scene. We are at liberty, however, to record that upon Mr. Musty's departure half an hour later, Mrs. Blowover accompanied him to the door, and as she shook hands with him in parting, a bright, golden circlet glittered on her finger, which had in some way been transferred there from its former position upon the little finger of Mr. Musty's right hand.

There he lay, in state, in the parlor. In the excess of her suddenly awakened esteem and affection, the landlady had insisted upon paying the despised attic lodger this mark of respect. Surrounded by flowers, prominent among them one piece bearing conspicuously the card of Madame Blowover, one would scarcely suppose that he had died two days before, in the dingy garret of that house, attended only by a few companions as poor and friendless as himself.

The story of the man who was troubled with indigestion, in consequence of having swallowed an unprecedented number of black crows, was traced at last to the fact of his having remarked on a certain occasion to his wife that he thought he saw something "as black as a crow" in the food he was at the time eating. This incident, if it ever occurred, furnishes a fair illustration of the enormous dimensions often attained by a report that had its origin in something only one remove from nothing whatever. That an actor, dying in pov-

erty should have laid by in more prosperous days, and sacredly kept five hundred dollars, to be used in defraying his funeral expenses, might have passed for an incident scarcely deserving the prominence of a footnote in general history, had it not been for the rapid and magnificent transformation that Madame Rumor gave to this little occurrence. While preparations were making for the funeral obsequies, the swift-footed runner was on her rounds; and before the day of the burial, it was generally understood, or at least believed, that the once famous and popular actor, Thomas Harcourt, although living in apparent poverty for some time, had been actually keeping fifty thousand dollars laid carefully away, and which was now to be distributed among his legatees—ten thousand to go to the full-fledged, middle-aged, well preserved and very attractive Madame Blowover.

After Mr. Musty with many professional flourishes had fastened down the coffin lid, the casket was raised and carried out by the pallbearers—his fellow-lodgers being the only persons in attendance who failed to echo the wail of despair to which Mrs. Blowover gave utterance. The receptacle of the actor's mortal remains was then placed in the hearse, and the doors were closed by Musty with a peculiar professional snap denoting that he was well satisfied with the situation in general, and himself in particular. The carriages then rolled up and were rapidly filled by one after another of that gay, merry throng, in which the female persuasion largely predominated, claiming and expecting to have a free funeral ride at the expense of the fifty thousand dollars so thoughtfully saved for this emergency.

Mrs. Blowover, having seated herself in the first carriage with the chief mourners, was enlivening the scene by wiping her eyes, while very tenderly and

pathetically expatiating upon the many virtues of the deceased, as evinced in his generous remembrance of his friends. Musty, meanwhile, running this way and that, like a lost dog at a horse fair, while as often as he caught sight of his innamorata he would smile and lightly kiss the tips of his fingers, to be rewarded each time by the sweetest look that estimable lady could give through the tears she was shedding for poor Tom Harcourt.

With much banging of doors, cracking of whips, and starting of horses, the funeral *cortège* was finally under way—one long line of shining black coaches, threading its serpentine course in and out among the other vehicles that were thronging the streets at that hour. Pedestrians would pause, count the carriages, and wonder who was the social grandee whose remains were being thus escorted to their final resting-place.

The solemn train moved on until it reached a stately granite edifice, surmounted by a towering steeple, whose apex, like an index finger, pointed the way to heaven. The outer doors had already been opened and a bier placed at the entrance of the broad aisle, by four men sent forward for that purpose by Musty. These men now brought the bier to the sidewalk, and placed the coffin on it; the hearse meantime, moving onward, and the carriages depositing their living freight.

All being now ready, the four men with automaton-like movement, bore their burden toward the church entrance; and as the two foremost were about to enter, another inner door was opened, and a tall, imposing form arrested their advance, while behind him two others were standing—a sort of rear guard.

“Forbear!” commanded the figure, with a repelling wave of his hand.

“Forbear!” echoed the rear guard.

The men set down their burden, and every eye was riveted upon the speaker, every ear strained to learn the cause of the untimely interruption. Musty was dumb with amazement. He had duly notified the clergyman that morning, and now stood between two fires—dreading the anger of his rector, on the one hand, and the displeasure of his present patron on the other.

The clergyman had met the corpse—but how? Not in official robes, and with the greeting of the sublime words: “I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead yet shall he live. And whosoever liveth and believeth in me, shall never die”—but rather saying in fact if not in words: “Stand back, ye profane, come not near to me, for I am holier than thou.”

Recovering from the consternation into which this unexpected turn of affairs had thrown him, McCready, stepping forward with quiet dignity said:

“I understood sir, from what I supposed was reliable authority, that the body of my friend could have Christian burial from this place.”

“You were misinformed, sir. Our burial service must not be used for those who die excommunicate.”

“Mr. Harcourt, sir, was a baptized member of your denomination,” replied McCready warmly, “and there is no evidence nor any reason to suppose that he had ever been excommunicated.”

“I am not disposed, sir, to discuss the question with you at this time,” was the cold rejoinder. “I understand he pursued the disreputable calling of the stage, and if not excommunicated he should have been. He is excluded from our ministrations.” And the gentleman waved his hand, as if to waft contagion from him.

“He was a man who loved his Bible and his God!” retorted McCready, his eye flashing with indignation.

"And the example of his life, if tried by the test of sincere integrity, would put to the blush many wearing garments they profane."

"Nothing more, sir," interposed Dr. Simpcox. "There is a little church around the corner where they will bury anybody. And as for you, Mr. Musty," he added, turning to the shaky sexton, silent for once, "your unwarrantable forwardness and presumption in this affair will come to your notice again at the proper time. Good-day, gentlemen." Whereupon he, and the two men behind him drew back, and the doors were closed.

At the little church around the corner the simple, solemn service was performed; and with its benison upon him they laid his body away, his spirit having already gone forward to that world where every sincere, honest and earnest soul finds a welcome and a happy home.

CHAPTER X.

THE PROPOSAL.

“Into these ears of mine,
These credulous ears, he pour'd the sweetest words
That art or love could frame.”

—*Beaumont's Maid's Tragedy.*

AND here it is right and becoming to bring into the foreground again the gushing young lady, Miss Arabella Grimshaw, whom we last saw on the occasion of her grand and successful *début*.

From the moment Miss Grimshaw was thrown out upon the rollicking, but unsteady and treacherous waves of society, she was borne right along, with a rush of invitations, rides, drives and conquests, furnishing the delighted young lady with a rare and beautiful phantasmagoria to look back upon, somewhat resembling the long, but tortuous line of silvery foam that a gayly rigged vessel, ploughing her way through the blue sea, leaves in her wake, to show the path over which she has gone.

Admiring swains, after looking longingly for a while at a distance, obtained at last the honor of her acquaintance, and by their many gallant attentions, so full of meaning to those who know what they mean, essayed to draw and bear off the glittering prize. As swarms of flies gather about a cask of sugar, each willing, but not able, to carry off the entire lot, so did Miss

Grimshaw's flattering and fluttering attendants gather around her, until they discovered that one, more lucky than any, had captured and carried her off.

That victorious contestant was Mr. Samuel Jones, who, ever since the *fête* night, had been her secretly favored and devoted attendant, until he had at last encompassed and conquered the right to take a place by her side with an air of modest assurance that no one dared to resist. His gallant and persistent attentions, his elegant costume and complete absorption in the charms of the heiress, was more than her heart could resist, and she soon found that the desire as well as the power to resist them was gone.

Miss Grimshaw was romantic, and had long pictured to herself just such a hero as Samuel Jones—her sample picture being taken from various novels she had been accustomed to read and which had, in truth, formed the principal part of the young lady's actual education.

Fiction is the dress that has thus far been given, and is likely to continue to be given, to the sentiments that enter into and form the principal and controlling part of the education of the race, moral, social and religious. This style of dress is the only one that can be so adjusted as to suit the views and purposes of him who has a thought, whether true or false, to present. Against fiction as a form or vehicle of thought, we have, therefore, nothing to say. The evil comes in when it is used to introduce false and damaging sentiments; to dress vice in forms that attract and allure the sensuous imaginations of thoughtless young people, putting gambling adventurers into presentable shapes, and sending them to places that are, or should be, sacred to purity and innocence.

Miss Grimshaw had moreover been taught and be-

lieved that when the heart of a woman responds to an offer of love, that response should be veiled by simulation and pretended indifference; and this led her to play the coquette for some time with Mr. Jones, and endeavor to make him believe that his attentions were of no special interest to her. But that gentleman by reason of his profession had grown accustomed to look for and detect thoughts under the surface and quite at variance with outward behavior, and he believed that the time had now come when the citadel of the young lady's affections could be successfully stormed, and a channel opened, in that way, to the "old governor's" coffers. The time had now come when considerable money was needed to pay for clothes, bouquets, rides, and other incidental expenses unavoidably incurred while angling for and bringing in this coveted prize.

The desired opportunity to say the right word at the opportune time was found at a party to which he had escorted the fair Arabella. Having concentrated his attentions upon her, through the earlier part of the evening, in a way that afforded no room for doubt as to their import and ultimate purpose, he drew her hand through his arm, at the end of a waltz through which he had been whirling her, and led her into a conservatory adjoining the drawing room. With an air of respectful tenderness, so marked and deferential that its meaning was not to be misunderstood, he placed her in a chair. This done, he stood and regarded her for a few moments in silence, with an air of rapt devotion; then lowering his voice to its softest and most winning cadence, he began the long contemplated siege. Samuel Jones, Esq., per Miss Arabella Grimshaw, representative of an indefinite number of thousands of that desirable and indispensable commodity—cash.

"Miss Grimshaw—my dear Arabella!" he said, with

a cautious glance to see that his words were falling on no ear but her own. "You must, ere this, have interpreted the meaning of my exclusive attentions, and must have become conscious of the emotions your peerless attractions have been kindling in my heart. Yes, dear Arabella," he continued, gaining courage and eloquence, and laying his hand on his heart in the most approved style, "from the moment my enraptured gaze secured one responsive look from you in return, that look bound me a willing captive. And here I am now, adored one; may I hope that my undying love is returned?"

Now all this was very delightful, of course, and Arabella trembled and fluttered with gratified vanity over her brilliant conquest. Her elegant suitor had actually created a buzz among the girls of her set, and having now conquered and gained him she intended to keep him. But the way was open for a little delightful and refreshing flirtation, and she did not intend to let the opportunity pass unimproved. Besides, acceptable as the proposal was in itself, Mr. Jones had committed a fatal error in his manner of making it, which he must be made to atone for. He had actually proposed to her while standing! and she would accord to no man the distinguished privilege of gaining her hand by any exertion short of going down on his knees. So drawing herself up, and casting upon him a look of well simulated surprise, she replied:

"Really, Mr. Jones, I do not know that I have given you any reason to suppose that an interview of this nature would be agreeable to me."

The countenance of Samuel Jones instantly took on an expression of despair that would certainly have made the fortune of the actor who could have successfully portrayed it.

“Do not say so, Miss Arabella, I conjure you!” he exclaimed in what is known as the “heavy tragedy” style and tone. “Most beautiful lady, the possession of that lily hand is indispensable to my existence! Speak but one word and make me blessed forever.”

“I shall have to take the matter into consideration,” responded Arabella, toying with her fan. “I am not at all sure that I would——”

Mr. Jones saw what was wanting; and reluctant as he was to run the risk of soiling a new and very fine pair of doeskins procured for this special occasion—not bought, for they had not been paid for, and never would be—he sank gracefully on one knee before his obdurate lady-love, and clasped her now unresisting hand in his own.

“See, I have thrown myself at your feet! Can you longer refuse to make me the happiest of mortals? Tell me, peerless Arabella! will you be mine—my very own?”

The crowning moment of her triumph had come. She had at last brought to her feet the man whom all her young lady acquaintances and friends had united in pronouncing such a love of a man, and so perfectly elegant; in regard to whom a full score had gone half-crazy, and as many more were no longer on speaking terms, because of the jealousies the charming cavalier had excited. With a delightful consciousness of the envy her conquest would produce in the minds of her female competitors, Arabella allowed her head to droop upon the shoulder of her subjugated admirer, and murmured—just as she had done a hundred times before, alone in her room, addressing some swain whom her fancy had brought to a similar predicament—in a whisper:

“Your wish is granted, I will be your—your——”

"Peerless bride!" supplemented the delighted wooer. "I am the most favored and honored of men!"—the last two words not being particularly distinct for the reason that his perfumed mustache was at the same time pressed upon her rosy lips.

"Now do let us go back to the parlors," said Arabella, yawning. "I am losing all the dances, and everybody will be wondering where I am."

Mr. Jones released her with a look and air of tender reproach.

"Very well, my love! To-morrow I will call upon your father, and ask his consent to our speedy union." And he escorted her back to a conspicuous position in the dancing room.

With a heart beating exultantly Arabella sank to sleep at a late hour that night—or rather, a very early hour the next morning. Engaged! how perfectly lovely! She felt as if two inches had been added to her height, and very many more to her importance. What a talk it would make! And while debating as to how many and what bridesmaids she would select, and how many yards of satin should be in the train of her wedding gown, Arabella fell asleep.

"Well, Arabella, did you have a nice time last night?" her father inquired as she took her seat opposite him at the breakfast table the next morning.

"Elegant! And by the way, father," leisurely sipping her chocolate: "Mr. Jones told me that he intended to call on you this morning. I told him that you would be likely to be here until pretty nearly noon, to-day."

"Hm!" Mr. Grimshaw looked up quickly while a frown gathered on his forehead. "What business has Mr. Jones with me?"

"He will tell you that when he comes, most likely!"

reported Arabella, with a careless shrug of her shoulders. "That is all the message he gave me."

Mr. Grimshaw arose from the table, perplexed and annoyed. He had noticed the attentions of Jones to his daughter, but without anticipating any serious results. He knew the man, although prepossessing in manners and attire, to be a profligate gambler—a professional adventurer, a "man about town," living by his wits, and not worth a cent. He was a pleasant enough fellow to know, casually—but he inwardly and firmly resolved, right then and there, while pacing the library floor, that "if that presuming scoundrel Jones was after Arabella he'd send him to the right about in short order!"

While in this frame of mind, and getting more so, a servant appeared to announce that Mr. Jones was in the parlor. Descending to the apartment, he found Mr. Jones, sure enough, and with him—Arabella. The visitor rose at his entrance and bowed with easy grace, not unmixed with that assurance that had served in lieu of more desirable virtues, thus far.

"Good-morning, Mr. Grimshaw!" he said blandly.

"Good-morning, sir!" Mr. Grimshaw replied, brusquely. "You wish to see me, I understand?"

"Yes, sir; on important business—if you will pardon my trespassing upon your valuable time," was the conciliatory rejoinder. But Mr. Grimshaw didn't conciliate.

"Very well, sir. Arabella, you may leave the room."

"Pardon me, sir," Mr. Jones extended one lavender kidded hand deprecatingly. "My business concerns your fair daughter no less than yourself. I beg that she may be allowed to remain."

Mr. Grimshaw elevated his eyebrows with an expression of displeased surprise.

"Please to state your business," he said curtly.

"I will do so," replied his visitor, who saw "breakers ahead," but was not yet disposed to doubt his ability to surmount them. "I have for some time known and admired your fair daughter, and that admiration has ripened into love. Last evening I declared my sentiments, and learned to my joy that they were reciprocated. I now ask your sanction and blessing."

"My sanction and blessing?" repeated Mr. Grimshaw furiously. "Have you sir, the presumption to address me upon such a subject? And you, artful girl—" turning to his daughter, "what right have you to bestow your affections upon this fellow without consulting me?"

"What right?" repeated Arabella, aghast at this unexpected *denouement*, and letting her voice keep pace with her rising temper, "my affections, sir, are my own, I'd have you to know, and I will bestow them where I please!"

"You will find it necessary to recall them, in this instance, then," retorted her father. "No profligate gambler will have the opportunity to waste a dollar of my money through any trick of this kind. I command you to dismiss this man at once, and never notice or speak to him again!"

With a passionate burst of tears, Arabella rushed forward and flung herself into the arms of her lover, clinging to him with a fervor and tenacity that fairly made him gasp for his breath.

"I won't dismiss him!" she exclaimed hysterically, "You are a cruel, tyrannical, hard-hearted father to say such slanderous things of my Samuel. I don't believe a word of them, and I won't send him away!"

"Then I will," said Mr. Grimshaw, white with rage. "If you are not out of this house in five minutes, sir, I

will call a servant and have you forcibly ejected! Do you understand that?"

Mr. Jones understood perfectly; and saw plainly that under the present circumstances it was useless to attempt to prolong the interview. He unclasped Arabella's clinging arms, and whispering a single word in her ear, made a polite bow to the irate merchant, and withdrew.

"Now, you girl," Mr. Grimshaw said, when the door had fairly closed behind the retreating lover, "go to your room, at once, and don't presume to leave it to-day. And let me never again, at your peril, hear the name of 'Jones' from your lips!"

Arabella flounced out of the room, and upstairs, where she flung herself down in a storm of passionate weeping; while Mr. Grimshaw, congratulating himself upon having "nipped that game in the bud," took his morning glass of bitters, and went downtown to his business.

CHAPTER XI.

WAYS AND MEANS.

"Circumstance must make it probable
Whether the cause's justness may command
Th' attendance of success. For an attempt
That's warranted by justice, cannot want
A prosperous end."

—Nabb.

"ONE goes and another comes," remarked McCready quietly, as they were all seated together on the evening of the day after the funeral. "As if to compensate for poor Tom's death, a little waif drops across our path; and—" laying his hand kindly upon the head of Rolina, who nestled by his side—"what are we going to do with her?"

"Why, I am to stay here with you, ain't I?" Rolina asked, with a quick, apprehensive anxiety in face and voice, and a firmer grasp of the friendly hand. "I have no place to go, and you promised to take care of me."

"And so I will, little one, never fear," her friend replied, smiling reassuringly upon her. "So long as I have hands to work with, or can get a crust to share between us. But," he added, addressing his companions, "it will be necessary to resolve ourselves into a committee of ways and means, and decide what is best to be done under these somewhat peculiar circumstances."

It was not often that this *coterie* of friends had a leisure hour, and even now they could scarce afford to indulge in the unwonted luxury; but the important change which had taken place in their domestic economy made some different arrangements necessary, and a careful consideration of all the circumstances was required.

For half an hour before McCready spoke, they had been silently enjoying the fire and their freedom from active labor. They all felt the need of such relaxation. Scratch had been bending all day over a painting he had hopes of selling; and Brown having devoted the most of the previous night to the preparation of a short, but thrilling romance, had succeeded, after traversing half the city, in disposing of it for fifteen dollars, and had hurried home, without incurring the expense of either lunch or car fare, that he might contribute the sum unbroken to their mutual interests and necessities.

McCready had been the least successful of the trio. As the lost and weary traveler, seeking food and shelter, sees a distant light and goes for it, only to find a forsaken hunter's fire, so did the actor, from morn till snowy eve, go from place to place, only to find that there was nothing there for him. At last, having gone the rounds, as he had done many times before, with similar results, he turned his weary steps toward home—hope, the last thing in the human heart that dies, sustaining him with the encouraging intimation that perhaps one if not both of his friends had “struck a lead,” that day.

The promises that Hope holds out are generally good except in the matter of time, in regard to which it is never exactly safe to trust her. But in this instance Brown was there with his fifteen dollars, and Hope stood redeemed, vindicated, and ready for another trial.

"I am scarcely the right one," said McCready, breaking the silence that had followed his last remark, "to assume the leading part in this deliberation. Money is what we need just now, and my financial status at this particular time would not warrant me in assuming the responsible post of chairman of a committee on ways and means."

"I am good on *ways*," said Scratch. "But as for *means*—let me see—just three dollars and fifteen cents."

"You both know," said Brown somewhat gravely, "that the fifteen dollars I raised to-day is yours as well as mine. Half of it must go, however, at once, to the madame downstairs—poor Tom's prospective legatee."

"Well, Brown," said McCready, "we may well be thankful that we have the means to meet that debt, and keep ourselves in this grateful garret a few weeks longer."

"I shall finish this painting, soon," said Scratch, "and if I get a sale for it, as I hope to do, I shall have at least twenty-five dollars."

"Hopes are good things to have about in dark, stormy weather," said McCready, smiling. "Without them I would have gone 'where the woodbine twineth' long ago. But I do not believe in giving up—no, never, never!"

"Nor I," "nor I," echoed his companions.

"Nor do I believe," continued McCready, "in making a profession that carries with it the elements of a genuine use subservient to the cupidity of men, who, for gain, are ready to minister to the lowest and basest passions of degraded human nature. I have had several offers, lately, with a promise of a liberal salary, provided I would assist in some of those immoral representations that are being produced, and becoming so

deplorably popular. No, no!" he added, warming with his subject; "the man who tells us that it is ever *necessary* to do deliberate wrong, utters a blasphemy against that Truth which is eternal and never breaks its promises. It may sometimes be necessary to descend to occupations much lower and more humble than those which we have chosen and would gladly follow; but there is honest, useful, remunerative work *somewhere* for him who is willing to do it."

"My sentiments!" "And mine!" said Scratch and his friend; the latter adding: "This long lane will have a turn at last that will bring to view a broad, open field and brighter prospects."

"And yet it is true, after all," said McCready with a half-sigh, "that our present needs cannot be met with a draft on our future hopes. I did suppose, until this afternoon, that there would be at least fifty dollars left out of poor Tom's five hundred. I dropped in at Musty's on my way home, to learn the best and worst, and he gave me a bill of items already prepared, and intimated somewhat pointedly that he would expect his money to-morrow—which he must of course have. Fourteen dollars and thirty-nine cents left, you see—and that is already bespoken." He cast a significant glance at Rolina, whose meager wardrobe demanded immediate replenishing.

"It was generous in Musty," said Brown, "to leave even that small margin. I was expecting he would take a judgment against us for deficiencies."

"Which might have been more easily obtained than satisfied," supplemented Scratch.

"There will, at any rate, be enough," said Brown, "to supply in a plain way, the immediate wants of our little friend."

"That is so," said McCready. "But there is another

feature of the case left unprovided for, and that is as to locating her. If only we had the means to put her into a school, or could find her a comfortable home, where we could be sure that she would be properly cared for, and not have her young life literally starved and crushed out, as is too often done in the charitable institutions—so-called; but here again that ‘if’ comes in to balk us. It takes only two letters to make it, but it is as large as a mountain sometimes.”

“Oh, well,” remarked Brown, “some way will be opened. ‘The darkest hour—’ you know. Fortune may smile upon us in an unexpected moment, and until the fickle dame does turn her face this way and perform that benevolent operation, we can struggle along somehow. We are no nearer annihilation now than we were a hundred years ago.”

“I see no way,” said McCready, after a few moments’ silent and anxious thought, “but to let the child remain here with us until some more convenient and suitable provision can be made.”

“I am so glad you cannot afford to send me away,” said Rolina, starting up, and betraying a lively interest in this part of the conversation. “I won’t cost you much. I’ll try not to, at any rate. I will eat just as little as ever I can, and I can cook and wash, and save you a good deal of expense. I can keep house for you.”

“She seems to have a lively appreciation of some of the ways and means of promoting economy,” laughed McCready, regarding her with admiration. “What a unchristianlike old sinner that aunt of hers must have been, that the child at so tender an age, is so lamentably *au fait* at the disagreeable art. But, child,” he added, turning upon Rolina a kind and protecting expression, “we shall not allow you to half-starve yourself in order to save money for us.”

"Oh, I won't starve; a very little will do for me," persisted the child. "And I can really save more than I cost. I can do the things that you now have to pay money for."

"If your ability were equal to your disposition I have no doubt you would accomplish wonders!" McCready replied indulgently. "But you are young and inexperienced—only a girl—and what can girls do?"

"What can they do?" repeated Rolina, aroused from her usual shyness by her desire to enumerate the good offices she could perform for her friends. "A good deal, Mr. McCready—at least I can! Why, I have had to work ever since I can remember, and I know all about housekeeping. I can make bread, and sew, and wash and iron, and do ever so many things! Oh, if you'll only try me, you'll be as glad as ever you were in your life, that you kept me with you, and did not send me away."

"Brava! brava!" cried Brown and Scratch with a round of applause, as the child, breathless from her rapid utterance, and fairly frightened at her own eloquence, drew back, her eyes glowing like lamps in her face, pale from excitement. "That was a brave speech, McCready, her plea is irresistible," added the artist, bending a gaze of kindly sympathy upon the little pleader. "We must not think of any other disposal of her at present. We will give her the room that poor Tom occupied, and she shall be our little sister and housekeeper both in one. It is the best arrangement we can make for the present, at all events."

"Yes, Brown, that is so. And by all that is human in us we will here bind ourselves each to the other, that we will take the best care of her, and guard her from every breath of harm or danger," exclaimed McCready. "We will be brothers to you, little Rolina,"

and he drew her close to him, his handsome face glowing with an expression of tender, chivalrous sympathy that might well win the love and confidence of the child. "And it will afford us an added incentive to our labors. But we may have to bear many privations, little one," he added, in a tone of unwonted sadness. "Are you strong and brave enough to suffer with us?"

"I can do and bear anything for those who will be kind to me, Mr. McCready," said Rolina, looking up with affectionate trust and gratitude. "I never had a real friend. My aunt was always scolding and whipping me, and saying what a wicked, ungrateful girl I was—and at last she turned me out of doors. I would have died but for you!" She clasped her hands convulsively together, while the old look of abject terror and distress crept again over the weary young face, and the tears fell in silent rain down her cheeks. "Oh, if you only will be good to me, and not let me be turned into the street again, I will love you and work for you as long as I live!"

"I accept the trust!" McCready exclaimed with solemn emphasis, and raising his deep earnest eyes, as the little waif laid her head on his shoulder to hide her tears. "God be my witness that my own life shall not be dearer to me than the welfare and happiness of this child. Let us make a solemn compact," he added, clasping her trembling form closely within his arms, and turning his serious face upon his companions. "According as we deal with this homeless, defenceless girl, whom Providence has thus strangely thrown across our path, and who comes to us claiming our protection by right of that true and universal charity which God Himself has taught us, by precept and example, so may He who sees and knows our hearts and intentions account to and deal with us!"

And gathering closer around the actor and his little *protégée*, each laid a hand softly on her bowed head and with solemn and reverent earnestness echoed his "Amen."

Thus was a home once more provided for the waif thrown out again, as she had been seven years before, upon the mercies of a cold world. And had the spirit of her departed mother been permitted to look upon those three noble-hearted men, whose protection and sympathies had provided a safe asylum for the homeless child, a benediction such as angels give would have descended upon them.

"What can girls do?" Rolina repeated, as she sprang from bed the next morning, feeling new life and vigor thrilling her nerves, and a sweet, strange warmth nestling around her heart. "Mr. McCready shall see that a girl as large and strong as I am can do a great deal more than he thinks. Oh, I feel as if I had a *home* now."

Completing her simple toilet, she came out into the large room, where she found McCready on his knees before the stove coaxing the fire into a blaze; having first dispatched his two co-laborers, one to procure some edibles for breakfast, and the other for a pail of water.

"Good-morning, little housekeeper," McCready exclaimed cordially. "So you are ready to commence operations and show us what girls can do? You have made a good start, at any rate, in rising so early."

"Oh, I'm used to that," Rolina answered, smiling. "I did all Aunt Pringle's work the last two or three years, and I had to be up early. When I have kept house for you for a few days you'll find that I'm twice as smart as you supposed, Mr. McCready."

"I haven't a doubt of it. 'Where there's a will there's a way,' they say; and you certainly have the will, whatever the ability may be to match it. But we don't want you to work too hard, child. Because we give you food and shelter we don't intend that you shall wear yourself out in our service."

"I shall never wear out," said Rolina, her eyes sparkling. "I'm real strong, Mr. McCready, and the little to be done here will scarcely tire me at all."

"There'll not be much work," remarked McCready, glancing around him. "We've conducted our house-keeping on the quick and easy principle, thus far; but now that we have acquired a brave and ambitious little housekeeper, I expect everything will look as bright as a new dollar."

At this moment the door opened to admit Brown with a pail of water, while Scratch followed with a basket full of provisions—not a very large basket, however. Bidding Rolina a cheerful good-morning, they put down their burdens, and were rewarded with a respectful intimation that their services would not be needed any more until breakfast was ready. Thanking the young housekeeper for so politely relieving them from further duty in that line, they at once relapsed into their usual employments. Scratch fell to sketching on the first piece of paper he took up, while Brown, pen in hand, woefully invited a morning visit from any stray literary muse that might happen to be wandering that way.

McCready, however, stood watching his little charge, with a half-amused, half-incredulous smile playing around his lips, as her deft fingers manipulated the materials under consideration. Becoming convinced, at last, that she was fully equal to the present emergency, he drew back from the fire.

"I see you know what you are about," he said, casting an admiring glance at her grave, earnest little face. "And as I have a little time to spare before breakfast, I will take a turn out of doors and see if there is any news stirring."

He went out, while Rolina, dividing her attention between the stove and table, arranged the latter with as much neatness and embellishment as the case would admit of, and had just placed the smoking meal upon it when McCreedy returned.

"Ah, just at the propitious moment," he exclaimed, striking an attitude. "You are a smart little worker. Let us fall to at once, for time is precious."

They gathered around the table, McCreedy invoking the Divine blessing in a few simple words, and were soon busily engaged in discussing the good cheer. McCreedy declared it was the best breakfast he had ever tasted, except at his mother's table. Brown pronounced the coffee nectar; and as for the ambrosial food the gods were fed on, he said he had never been able to learn what it was, but was willing to wager his income for a month, that it wasn't half so good as those fried potatoes. Scratch cleared his plate and passed it for more, at the same time vowing that if the Queen of England should chance to want a *chef de cuisine* he would certainly use his influence at court to obtain the position for Rolina.

Our little heroine listened in happy silence to their extravagant encomiums, which were better than meat and drink to the child who had all her life yearned for kindness. Hard and faithfully as she might work for Miss Pringle, she could never seem to please her, never win from her one expression of commendation or encouragement; and now, when her simple services were so warmly appreciated, she was for awhile fairly bewil-

dered, and when she could at last realize that it was really meant for her, the grateful tears filled her eyes and choked her voice as she tried to thank them.

"And now," said McCready, as he finished his breakfast, and pushed back his chair. "What's the programme for to-day? I must go out of course."

"So must I," said Scratch, "I got an idea for a very attractive little scene when I was out last, and must revisit the locality and take some additional notes."

"What a company of pedestrians we will be!" laughed the author. "I am going out to gather materials for my next romance, and must look out for something exceptionally inspiring."

"And you, young housekeeper," said McCready to Rolina. "You will be left here quite alone. You can just tidy up the room a little, and amuse yourself as you like, but don't try to do much. Some of us will be back before long. Good-day." He took up his hat and left the room, and the others soon followed.

"Now," Rolina exclaimed, as the door closed behind them, glancing, at the same moment, at the little wooden clock upon the mantel, whose hands were nearing the hour of eight. "I am to *amuse* myself, am I? They have all gone—that's a good arrangement—and I'll see how much I can have done before they come back."

With a light and happy heart the little housekeeper commenced her labor of love. First, the few breakfast dishes were washed and restored to their respective places, the rooms carefully swept and dusted, and the few articles of furniture arranged in a way which seemed after all only the order of disorder, but was the nearest approach to order that could be obtained under the circumstances, and added very greatly to the appearance of the humble place.

Having adjusted the rooms in the best way she could our young heroine was thinking what to do next, when a small firkin, which being inverted was made to do duty as a bench, attracted her notice.

"The very thing!" she exclaimed with a sudden inspiration. "There must be some clothes for the wash, unless they have put them out, and I don't believe they have, so early in the week. On a bright day like this the things will dry in no time. Oh, if I could only get them all done while they are away."

Animated by this, to her, delightful prospect, Rolina procured some water, and while it was heating looked for the garments which she felt sure were somewhere, and finally discovered in three little bundles in their sleeping room. Ambition lent strength and dexterity to her movements, and the few pieces were soon ready to hang out.

But Rolina had no starch nor money to buy it with, and in the next place she was not certain whether the "madame" below would give her the privilege of the yard for drying the clothes. Her only hope lay in a direct, personal and immediate appeal to Madame Blowover. But her experience with that functionary had been mixed, and not of a character to warrant anything more than a very dim hope of success. Her first greeting had been: "What is this trollop doing here?" and notwithstanding the lady had manifested a modified temper on another occasion, and gone so far in her patronage as to pat her cheek, it was while she was cherishing the comforting belief that she was one of the liberally remembered legatees of poor Harcourt. Now that hope had collapsed; and it was among the things that were only just possible that some selfish motive might prompt the madame to grant the coveted favor.

But the appeal must be made. So, locking the door

and pocketing the key with a delightful sense of proprietorship, which, like many other sensations, is very exhilarating the first time it is experienced, Rolina descended the stairs rather timidly. She had not met the landlady since the day of the funeral, and her nerves were sorely tried at the thought of going into the presence of a lady of so much significance.

The parlor door stood partly open and the madame's portly form, ensconced in a rocker, was slowly swaying to and fro. She was evidently deeply absorbed in contemplating a bit of fabric which she held in her hands.

Mrs. Blowover had been quite prostrated by one of her constitutional headaches, the day after the funeral. Her dear Mr. Musty was the innocent occasion of that trouble, and brought it on by mentioning to her that the money left by Mr. Harcourt was, after all, barely sufficient to pay funeral expenses. Her legacy went down at that instant to the vanishing point, and a sharp pain went through the back of her head. But the pain passed away entirely when Mr. Musty called again the next morning and very innocently remarked that his children were all married and gone, and were able to take care of themselves and that his fortune and professional income were sufficient for at least one more than himself.

Mrs. Blowover was now expecting another visit from Mr. Musty that afternoon, and was desirous of putting herself in a trim that would render her not simply very attractive, but absolutely irresistible. With this view she had been busy for the last two hours, fashioning and fitting a cap whose coquettish design and effect would inevitably bring dear Mr. Musty nearer to her than ever before. The close proximity might damage the cap, it is true; but the sacrifice would be small compared with the benefits likely to result. All she

needed now was a yard or so of some gay ribbon, and how to procure this article was just at that moment the widow's perplexity. Her only servant, busy in the kitchen, could not be conveniently spared, and there was no one else to send. Just then she caught sight of our heroine hesitating at the door, and her expression changed at once. It is refreshing to notice the sudden graciousness manifested by some very excellent people toward one whom they have just discovered may be used to advantage.

"Come in a moment, dear," she said; and as Rolina, very agreeably surprised, obeyed, the landlady stretched out her fat hand and grasped her affectionately.

"See here, dear—you're a smart little thing, I know you are! Won't you just run out and get me two yards of cherry-colored ribbon? You'll see the store right around the corner—you can't miss it."

Rolina's eyes sparkled. Here was a chance for an exchange of favors, and the obligation need not be all on one side. So, promising compliance, she modestly preferred her own requests.

"To be sure, dear," replied madame, ready to accord almost anything for the sake of getting that cap finished in time. "I'll get you the starch when you come back, and you can have the yard as long as you want it. It will take you only a minute to go. Now be quick, dear. Here's twenty-five cents to get two yards, just like this piece wrapped around the money. It won't cost more than twenty cents, and what is over you can keep."

"Don't ask me to take pay for an errand, Mrs. Blow-over. But," she added, half-frightened at her own temerity—"if you could loan me a couple of irons, by-and by——"

"Certainly, certainly!" said the landlady, beaming

with smiles; and in a few minutes more the ribbon, just what she wanted, was placed in her hands, and Rolina, with the starch and the irons, all aglow with delight at her success, was hurrying upstairs.

In an hour the bright sun had dried the few pieces thoroughly, and the irons were hot. To dampen and iron them consumed two hours more; then the borrowed irons were returned, and she addressed herself to another department of her self-imposed labors.

Having been almost constantly employed in repairing hose for herself and aunt, Rolina had been in the habit of carrying with her on all occasions a neat little housewife, well stocked with necessary articles, also a ball of yarn. These were still in the pocket of her dress and were brought into immediate use, for, after laying the other clothes aside, and restoring the room to order, she engaged in the quiet and not unpleasant task of darning several pairs of socks that stood sadly in need of that sanitary operation.

While thus actively engaged, the day had worn on to three o'clock, and she had just finished the last pair of socks, when the door opened and her three friends entered. For a moment they stared at the blushing, trembling child in utter amazement; then stepping nearer, McCready laid his hand lightly on her shoulder.

"How in the name of mystery, have you contrived to accomplish all this? Doing all the ordinary work, and then washing and mending our clothes; this savors of the miraculous! Have a legion of fairies helped you?"

"No fairies but these," she smilingly held up her hands. "And now don't you believe that girls can do something? But I'd like to have you buy me a couple of irons if you think you can afford it, Mr. McCready. I had to borrow, to-day. I went on an errand for the

landlady, and she let me have the loan of her irons as part pay."

"Well done! you understand the principle of exchange!" cried Brown, clapping his hands. "I declare she deserves a gold medal, McCready; she's worth her weight in diamonds!"

"You shall have the irons, my little friend, and anything else that you want, and we can afford to get," said McCready kindly. "Only you must promise that in your eagerness to help us you will not work beyond your strength. Will you promise this?"

The child raised her eyes earnestly to his.

"If I get sick, I cannot be your little housekeeper," she answered simply. "I shall try to keep well, so that I can be a real help, and not a trouble and burden to you."

"Bravely spoken," exclaimed her friends in a breath. "In union there is strength; but in our little band we have also the spirit of affection and energy, and we must prosper!"

The days passed quickly and pleasantly to the friends whose destinies fate had for a time linked so closely together. We scarcely need say that among all, no one was more diligent or earnest than our young heroine, who in a short time became indispensable to them, and who was fondly designated "the household angel."

One day, Brown, after having spent the previous evening as well as half the forenoon on a sketch, threw down his pencil and paper with a weary sigh.

"If I fag at this any longer now I shall go crazy!" he exclaimed. "It is all ready to copy, and after a turn out of doors I may feel able to go about it." He left the room, and as soon as the door closed behind him, Rolina laid aside the sewing with which she had been employing her time.

Three hours elapsed, and Brown returned, finding the young housekeeper still intent upon her work. But on opening his portfolio he found his sketch copied in a childish, but clear and legible hand.

"Is it possible that you have done this?" he said, turning to Rolina, whose face was bent still lower over her work.

"Please don't be angry!" she faltered at last, looking up. "You said it was all ready to copy, and I did want to help you—you looked so tired!"

"*Angry!*" repeated Brown, while his eyes filled. "No, indeed, dear child! it is indeed a great help and relief to me. But you must not—you really must not burden yourself with so many additional labors. I can take this in at once, thanks to your kindness!" and he went out again leaving the child with a heart overflowing with happiness.

So from day to day did Rolina show her once incredulous friends what a girl could do, until they began to wonder if her capabilities had any actual limit; and when they contrasted their present comfortable condition with the state that had prevailed before she came among them, it seemed to them that she must have been sent from heaven.



MC CREADY.

CHAPTER XII.

THE DUTIFUL SON.

LIKE an oasis in the desert that single dwelling stood on the desolate plain. Years had elapsed since the original farm lines had been obliterated, and the farms cut up in what were to be, "highly valuable building lots in the midst of a thriving city," still only nine houses, including the one to which we propose to turn our attention, had been erected upon the seven hundred and thirteen lots that were sold; and most of them were so meager in appearance, and so far apart, that a traveler, inquiring his way, would have been filled with amazement on learning that he was passing through the city of Blisburgh.

The city appeared to better advantage, however, by moonlight, for it might then very naturally be mistaken for some graveyard, laid out many years ago, and now waiting for an epidemic to fill it. The white-washed stakes, with figures on them, might be supposed to mark the number and position of the respective plots; and if the observer, on going back the next day, should chance to discover that he had been viewing a city rather than a graveyard, he might conclude, after all, that the error was not very great. If human bodies had not been buried there, human hopes had been, in much larger numbers. Many a poor workingman while gazing with enchanted admiration at the bright and beautiful air castle "a home of his own," had

put into six of those "city lots"—one for himself and the other five for his respective children—all the money he had been saving in the last thirteen years. His lots had long since gone for taxes, and would be of no value whatever, even if they had not. The fallen stake marked with his initials remained to show where his house in the "new city" was to have been.

Alas, for things that were to have been, and are not!

The house we propose to look into was the best of the nine, and around it some improvements had been made, or rather begun, but it looked lonely and desolate enough, notwithstanding. An elderly couple sat shivering by a fire, which, like them, had done its best, and was now dying by degrees. But a single look at those two old people would suffice to indicate to the observer that the true record of their lives would furnish evidences of better and brighter days in the past.

"Mary, our boy will not be here to-night," said the old man, rousing himself from a long, and apparently painful reverie.

The once stately ship that lies stranded on the beach on a tempestuous night may remind us of what that ship could have done and endured in just such a storm and in its palmy days; but we are glad that the old ship is now laid aside, and not exposed to the tempestuous winds whose fury would reduce it to a total wreck. With similar feelings we often regard an old man, and realize more fully than he does that he is no longer able to breast the storms of life, but must lie high up upon the beach, and sometimes neglected and alone.

"Our boy will not be here, to-night, Mary," repeated the old man, with a dreary resignation in his tone, as of one inured by long acquaintance to disappointment and hope deferred.

"Oh, yes, he will! He never breaks his word to his mother," replied the little spare, sprightly woman, glancing up, her careworn face all alight with a mother's trust in a beloved and dutiful son.

"No!" protested the father, with the dogged persistency of age rendered bitter and suspicious by long endured privation. "He is afraid to come through this storm. Like all the rest of the world, he has forgotten that we two old people exist."

"The storm won't keep him away," persisted the mother. "Because when he left last time he asked me if we had provisions enough for——"

The sound of hasty footsteps on the planked garden walk outside interrupted her; then the door opened and a gust of wind rushed in. Out went the light; the fire flashed forth an expiring gleam, its last and brightest—and was extinguished.

No matter for darkness or cold—maternal love was light and warmth enough; and as the door slammed to the mother was held in the warm embrace of her expected son.

"Ah, my poor parents! No light, and—bless me! no fire? But come, I mean that we shall have both."

What a world of cheer and vigor that impetuous nature seemed to impart. Even the old man smiled, and hurried as fast as he could, groping his way in the dark to the closet.

The mother's hands trembled with mingled cold and excitement, and she struck match after match with no success, and finally, putting her gently aside, her son undertook the task, and soon a light shone in the room.

"Mother, there's no kindlings," came in a despairing wail from the closet, where the old man had been fumbling on the floor. With a quick, apprehensive glance at her son, who was adjusting the chimney on the lamp, she hurried to her husband.

"Hush, father; don't let the boy hear you. You must get some more pickets from the fence."

Taking the hatchet, and without another word, the old man went out, and repeated blows outside were soon audible. Securing an armful of pickets, he brought them to the shed and was proceeding to split them up when the son, shocked and astonished by this revelation, appeared before him.

"Father, what are you doing here?"

"Getting kindlings, my boy. We've nothing for fire, and nothing to eat," the old man answered gloomily, despite a warning nudge from his wife, who had again just appeared upon the scene, anxious to conceal—as she had done, thus far—the true state of their extremity from her hard-working, self-sacrificing son. Before she could speak, the young man turned and put his arm around her, whispering reproachfully in her ear:

"Mother, you should not have kept such a secret from me; I had no idea matters were at this pass."

The poor little woman's fortitude failed her at the mingled love and grief in his tone, and she hid her face on his shoulder, sobbing. His hand moved caressingly over her hair for a moment; then putting her gently aside, he took his father's place, and soon reduced the pile to fragments. Gathering an armful he led the way back to the now lighted room; and as he steps over the threshold we recognize our hero, James Brutus McCready.

Straight to the stove he bore his burden, tumbling the wood pellmell on the floor, despite his mother's involuntary scream of remonstrance at the untidy act. Then she stood over him, regarding him with mingled pride, love and dismay, as he knelt before the stove, and began a vigorous attack upon it with the poker,

making the dust, smoke and ashes fly around in every direction.

The fire having been finally started to his satisfaction he rose, and placing a chair for his parents on either side of him, stood between, looking alternately upon each.

"Mother, this is no way to live. A cold night like this and no fire. If I had not come you must have perished before morning I fear."

Drawing up a small wooden bench, he sat down at his mother's feet, and laid his head in her lap, with one hand clasped warm in hers. What a scene of home love that flickering firelight looked upon. No wonder McCready's eyes filled with gathering tears, as his ear caught again and again a half-repressed sigh from his mother's lips, or that he dared not look up, lest his fortitude should forsake him entirely. The cheerful firelight shining upon the group illumined each face with a tender glow, and ere long its soothing warmth had lulled the elder man asleep.

"Mother," McCready said at last, gently caressing her hand, "I bring you good news to-night. I start to-morrow to fill a month's engagement in St. Louis. That may lead to a series of others, and then brighter days will dawn again, and such scenes as have transpired to-night will, I trust, return no more. My dear, brave little mother will find her dream of happiness become a reality. This house you have suffered so much to keep, shall be your own indeed, and made into a beautiful and attractive home for you."

He rose and bent tenderly over her; but his cheerful promises only served to start her tears flowing afresh.

"Come, mother, I have had no supper yet," he said in a rallying tone; and lifting her to her feet, he half-led, half-carried her to the closet, as he had so often

done in bygone properous times, when petitioning for some coveted dainty. As he opened the door, however, its utter poverty struck a chill to his heart. For a moment he regarded the empty shelves in silence; then turned to his mother, who stood silently weeping by his side.

"Mother, do you intend seriously to starve outright? Why did you not send me word that your provisions were gone?"

"I knew you would come to-night, James—and bad news is learned soon enough. The holder of the mortgage has written to us, threatening foreclosure if the interest is not paid more promptly. A payment is now due, and I have hardly dared to eat a mouthful, in my distress and anxiety to eke out what we have so as to save the money for the interest. It would be dreadful for your father to be turned out after all he has paid on this house! It would break his heart to have this place, on which he has expended the little that was left of his shattered fortunes, torn from us."

McCready drew a long breath, and then stood erect.

"My dear little financier of a mother, don't worry any more about the interest. I have money enough to pay that this time, and what you have saved by such painful sacrifice you must use for your comfort. As for this larder, I am happily able to replenish that without a moment's delay; but at peril of my most sovereign displeasure don't ever let such an 'awful void' occur again."

The young actor bent and kissed his mother tenderly; then stepping out into the hall, brought back a large basket, full to the handle, and gleefully spread its contents over the table. Tea, coffee, sugar, beef, mutton, and kindred comforts in the culinary line, rolled to view with delightful and apparently exhaustless profu-

sion, and when the basket was finally emptied and placed neatly beneath the table, he stood erect and regarded his mother, his face glowing with pleasure, and his eyes shining with tears that were no discredit but rather an honor and ornament to his generous manhood.

"You'll not starve for some time yet, if I can help it. And now mother—honor bright—have you had any supper?"

Mrs. McCready's heart was too full for utterance. She could only gaze through her tears at her handsome, manly son, and shake her head in reply.

"Then I shall install myself knight of the *cuisine*, on this momentous occasion," said McCready gayly, as darting to the closet he brought out a frying-pan. "I have been taking lessons, lately, mother, and you've no idea how proficient I am. Just wait until you see." And in another moment the savory and appetizing aroma was mingling with the warm air of the apartment, Mrs. McCready, meantime, quite restored to her normal condition of bustling activity, and with her heart animated with the hope and courage of her son's presence and words had inspired, busying herself in putting away the other articles. Her husband awoke just as the steaming coffee sent forth its inviting suggestion of supper; and a happy, hungry trio was soon gathered around the humble board, and partook heartily of the fare provided by the dutiful son.

Supper over, McCready brought the well-worn family Bible from its place on the old-fashioned bureau, and placed it on a small stand before his father, at the same time opening it at the Thirty-seventh Psalm. Tears stood in the old man's eyes, as with solemn emphasis he began:

"'Fret not thyself because of evildoers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity.' " Hav-

ing read through to the end of the Psalm they all knelt, and among the petitions that the old man's trembling voice uttered, was a solemn and earnest invocation for the richest blessings of heaven to descend upon and remain with the beloved and dutiful son then kneeling between them, and whose voice mingled so tenderly with theirs in a low and fervent "Amen."

Some quiet conversation ensued; McCready cheering the anxious hearts of his parents with his hopes and prospects, and relating the interesting history of his little *protégée*. Then, as the fire was burning low, they prepared to separate for the rest of which they all felt in need.

Upstairs, into a partly furnished room, Mrs. McCready preceded her son. The low bed, with its checkered quilt, and snow-white pillows and sheets, and the narrow but neat strip of carpet at its side, wore no uninviting aspect. Placing the candle upon a chest, the mother turned down the bedclothes, smoothing each pillow with a loving pat; and then with a good-night kiss and a final glance around to see that everything was right, she left the room.

Awhile McCready sat upon the bedside, thinking; then growing chilly, disrobed and laid down, but with his brain as busily at work as ever. An hour later a gentle step on the threshold, and the opening of the door warned him of the approach of some one, and a little figure glided to the bedside, and bending over the supposed sleeper, tucked the clothes around him in that quiet, comfortable way which mothers understand so well. Then, kneeling by the bed, she offered up, in words scarcely audible, a long, earnest prayer that her dear boy might be preserved from temptation and harm during his contemplated absence, and restored to her again in health and safety.

It is hardly necessary to say that McCready could not control his feelings sufficiently to keep up the semblance of sleep under such circumstances; and when his mother ended her prayer, the voice she loved so well was low and tremulous with tender feeling, as it joined once more with hers in a heartfelt "Amen."

Kissing him again good-night, and once more smoothing his pillow, Mrs. McCready left the room. And he was soon really asleep, with the deep, steady breathing of those who in peace and conscious innocence close their minds to the cares of this world.

CHAPTER XIII.

A MAIDEN EFFORT.

“And these vicissitudes tell best in youth,
For when they happen at a riper age,
People are apt to blame the fates, forsooth,
And wonder Providence is not more sage.
Adversity is the first path to truth.”

—Byron.

OUR *coterie* of friends who occupied the attic rooms in the old mansion continued their pleasant relations for some months, but it finally became apparent to our young heroine, Rolina Vernon, despite the constant and affectionate endeavors on the part of her friends to keep her in blissful ignorance of the real facts of the case, that circumstances were not only not improving, but were rather tending with alarming and merciless persistency in the opposite direction. For every dollar that came in, two went out—or at least would have gone, if they had been there to go. The financial outlook was the very reverse of inspiring; the cloud obscuring their horizon seemed to be growing broader and darker day by day, and the silver lining was becoming more indistinct.

Rolina's city life had comprised scarcely a year, and yet her constant association with older minds, while at the same time an attentive though silent and often unnoticed listener to their schemes for obtaining the means of subsistence, and the still harder problem of making the slender means that did come in cover

necessities of double their volume, had developed a maturity of thought far beyond her years; and after much secret and anxious deliberation, she determined to put her little hand to the wheel, and see if she could not be a factor in the way of making it move with more encouraging persistency. So one morning, as her friends were lingering over their frugal meal, endeavoring by lively conversation to conceal from her the fact that they were trying to find which way to turn to raise the next dollar, she broached the subject, by asking them to procure her some situation that would enable her to contribute at least a little toward lightening those expenses which they were incurring on her account.

The suggestion seemed to them too absurd, at first, to be seriously considered; but when they saw that she was in earnest McCready took her hand, which was trembling with the intensity of her feelings, and said kindly but firmly:

"My child, your motive is noble and generous, but what you propose is absolutely out of the question. You are doing a great deal more for us now than we are doing for you, and we cannot let you attempt anything more. Besides, you are far too young and inexperienced to go out into the world. No, no," he added, looking kindly into the disappointed and wistful face. "Stay at home and be our little household angel. Something better will turn up before long—take my word for it."

"I did not think of leaving you, Mr. McCready," urged Rolina. "But I have a great deal of spare time that I might and ought to spend in helping to earn some of the money we need, and in a great city like this there must be situations that even I could fill."

"There are, Rolina—plenty of them, and filled by

girls no older or stronger than you. But, my child, in this great city there are dangers around every such situation which you in your innocence and ignorance would not know how to avoid or escape. The guards that surround the poor and friendless furnish but a feeble defense against the cupidity and baser passions of men who have the protection that money and influence affords. No, Rolina; not while there is any life in the blood that circulates through my veins will I expose you to the mercies of a pitiless world. Our little lamb must not at this tender age venture into the wilderness where wolves and ravenous beasts of every sort are lying in wait for prey!"

The subject was dropped for that time, and the matter was not referred to again for some weeks; but as their financial prospects gave no indication of improvement, Rolina's thoughts were still turned in the same direction.

While busy at her duties one morning after a restless night, in which she had fallen asleep, at last, weeping, while thinking of the cruelty of her self-appointed guardians in destroying her air castles as fast as they were built, a scrap of a newspaper that McCready had used in lighting the fire attracted her attention, and as she picked it up, her eye fell upon an advertisement.

"Wanted: Girls to sell goods at bargain counter Apply at store, —Broadway."

Here was something she was sure she could do, and but for the opposition of her friends she would apply for the position at once. And then came the audacious thought—why not apply anyhow? For the last week or two McCready had been absent through the entire day, for his season at St. Louis had not been followed with the success that he had fondly predicted, and the

situation of that mortgage was becoming more desperately urgent; and the others had been spending but a few hours at home. Their three daily meals had dwindled to two; and she could be out nearly all day without being missed. It was a bold project, absurd and impracticable, with many chances of failure, and almost none of success; but it did not appear in that light to her, and she was possessed with the desire to try. She would disclose the secret as soon as she found that the experiment came out all right, and she was certain that it would. So, cutting out the slip, she finished her work, with burning cheeks and hands trembling with excitement; then going to her room, she donned her bonnet and shawl. As she came back to the main room, Brown, looking carelessly up from his writing, asked:

“Where away, little one?”

“I am going out for a short walk,” Rolina replied, flushing with the consciousness that she was not telling the *whole* truth. “I won’t be gone very long, Mr. Brown.”

“All right, don’t get lost,” and Brown resumed his pen, little dreaming what occasion he would have to remember his own words, while Rolina hurried out, and down Broadway. Reaching the designated number, she lingered outside to read the sign above the door, “N. Grimshaw & Co., Dry Goods, Wholesale and Retail,” and to conquer the nervous tremor that came over her at that critical moment; then turning the knob, she went in.

A number of applicants were there, and while waiting she had time to compose herself, so that when at last she was told to come forward she felt quite brave, although her voice faltered a little. She was required to answer a dozen or more questions, and her answers

seemed to be satisfactory, for she was engaged to come the following Monday at a salary of four dollars a week, ten hours a day—full time.

With throbbing pulses, Rolina hurried home. She never bestowed a thought upon the toil involved in that venture, but saw only that four dollars coming to her at the end of the week, and the many comforts and good things it would enable her to buy for her friends in exchange for their great kindness to her. The engagement, so fortunate and full of hope, was made on Saturday; and when the Sabbath passed, and Monday morning came the first ray of light found her astir.

She was not required at the store until eight o'clock, and would be back soon after six; and she could, as she fondly imagined, by rising early, and retiring late, manage to be away a few days—perhaps a whole week—before her friends need know anything about the arrangement. And when finally it came to their knowledge, and she had proved to them how easily she could do the work at home and earn four dollars a week besides, they would be very glad of it, and quite willing to let her have her own way.

No time was lost that Monday morning, in preparing breakfast, and when McCready left as usual, and the others had settled to their work, Rolina got ready for her appointment.

“What? off again?” said Scratch as she passed him. The child started guiltily.

“I have some things to buy, Mr. Scratch. Don’t wait for me if I’m not back when you want to go.” And taking up the small basket she used for their modest purchases, she hurried away to avoid any further questions that might not be so easily answered, and with a twinge of conscience at having come within the thickness of a word of telling an untruth. Hasten-

ing along, she arrived in good time and was soon at her post. But although accustomed to work from her childhood, our heroine was not prepared for the severe tax of remaining on her feet in one position throughout the entire day within a small circumscribed limit, and without relaxation or reprieve. And yet she was required to do so, even the first day, except the half-hour at dinner. There were, it is true, an abundance of stools near every counter of that dry goods palace. Oh certainly; but they were in front, not behind the counters—were there for the accommodation of customers; while the helpless, overworked slaves, by whose services their employer's coffers were filled, were allowed not even the harmless rest and comfort of sitting down now and then when no customers were there to be waited on. Occasionally one of those poor girls when exhausted beyond the limit of human endurance, with head sick and brain reeling, had the presumption to fall fainting across the counter; but an act so unbecoming and disreputable was not often committed, as it was certain to bring upon the unfortunate delinquent the wrath of the proprietor, followed by a severe reprimand, coupled with a warning of immediate dismissal if the offence were repeated.

Strict discipline and order, enforced if necessary, is in every department of business an indispensable condition of success; but it is a fatal error to suppose that true order, and the successful management of business require that the health and comfort of employees should be disregarded, and even the well-known laws of mental and physical welfare cruelly outraged. The most profitable horses are those that are well taken care of; and even the selfish instincts of men ought to warn them that misfortune and failure will in some way, sooner or later, come in and avenge every act of injus-

tice and cruelty inflicted upon those from whose labor the wealth they are seeking to roll up has been accumulated.

Such was the ordeal to which our unfortunate young heroine was subjected from the beginning of her labors until the signal was given by which the toil-worn slaves were released for the day. She had not fainted thus far, although more than once a trembling shadow before her eyes, and a constricted sensation at her heart, warned her that the limit of endurance was well-nigh reached. The hour of release came none too soon; but as she turned dizzily to quit the store she felt herself roughly seized by the arm. Turning back in surprise and terror, she found a clerk grasping her arm with one hand, and with his other hand on a small satchel which she had brought from home during the short noon spell for some additional purchases for supper. The hot blood rushed to her face, and that indomitable spirit that held the germ of a power yet to come forth shone in her eyes.

"What do you want with me, sir?" she asked, with a womanly firmness and dignity beyond her years.

"It is our rule to search our employees before they are allowed to leave the store," was the reply. "Let me see your satchel."

Rolina surrendered it in silence, and a hurried scrutiny proved that none of her employer's goods were concealed therein. Then the clerk thrust his hand into her pocket, and then attempted to raise the hem of her dress—an indignity which instantly met with a well-directed blow on the side of his head given with all the force that the clinched fist of the now thoroughly roused and indignant girl could impart.

The quiet, modest, and undemonstrative young woman who gives no one reason to suppose that any unbe-

coming freedom would be tolerated, is not the most likely one to run screaming from, or succumb fainting to the man who approaches her roughly or insultingly. It is more likely that the latent will, which shows its strength only when some obstacle is encountered, will come to her rescue, and prompt her to make a determined and generally successful resistance.

A hubbub ensued directly of course. Another clerk seized the excited girl, while Nicodemus Grimshaw, who had witnessed the scene from his counting room, immediately sent for an officer, who, hastily entering in a few moments, first bowed obsequiously to the merchant, and then placed his official grasp on the delinquent. Half an hour later Rolina was locked in a cell at the station house, there to remain until brought out for trial on the following day.

About 6:30 o'clock on this momentous evening McCready, returning from a long and fruitless search for employment, stood in front of the old mansion in the upper part of which he and his two friends had for the last few months enjoyed such a pleasant home sphere. Through the active, infilling life of one affectionate, energetic child, the place had been transformed as by magic from its former cheerless and dreary aspect to one of comfort and attractiveness, and permeated with the sphere of loyal and true fellowship.

Pausing on the front steps for a few moments, while his gaze wandered aimlessly up and down the street, McCready took a mental review of all that had transpired since that stormy evening when this little waif had come into his life and under his care, to repay so richly by her constant and unwearied affection, gratitude and service, the care and protection which he had extended and secured to her. Then whistling a gay tune he let

himself in with his latchkey, and ascended to the upper floor. The door was locked, and as he unfastened and opened it, the cheerful expression that an expected welcome had imparted to his countenance changed to one of blank amazement, followed at the next moment by an apprehension of serious trouble in some form.

It was not merely that the room was empty, but that it had evidently been so for several hours; for the lamp was unlit, the fire out, while an indescribable air of loneliness and desolation pervaded the place and sent a chill that was from something more than cold through McCready's strong frame.

"What can be the meaning of this?" he cried, as he groped his way around the room. "Can she have been suddenly taken ill? Perhaps she has a headache, and has lain down, and is still asleep. Poor little thing! I don't wonder that she should give out sometimes." With this suggestion, restraining somewhat the intensity of his first alarm, McCready hastily struck a match, and with the lighted lamp in his hand went to the door of Rolina's room and knocked lightly.

No answer.

"Rolina! Rolina! are you there? It is supper time, little housekeeper." But no response.

After a moment's hesitation he pushed open the door. One glance sufficed. On every side were evidences of her neat and tasteful habits; but the one main-spring that infused life, vigor and beauty into that little household, to whose thrifty, active industry every object bore witness, was not there.

For a moment McCready stood in hopeless bewilderment. What could be the meaning of this? A strange, perhaps terrible, mystery somewhere. That child must be found. Could it be possible that that old Gorgon, her aunt, had discovered and carried her

away? That seemed improbable—scarcely possible; and yet even that fate was a light one compared with another toward which his thoughts were apprehensively turned. But even if her aunt or any one else had entered the place and forced her suddenly away, she was certainly shrewd enough to leave some memorandum, note, scrap, writing, or sign of some sort, that would furnish a clew and put them on her track.

A careful search was immediately made, but nothing of the sort was found; and McCready was standing with folded arms, in utter stupefaction, when cheerful voices were heard outside, and Brown and Scratch came in.

“Hello! McCready; practicing for a statue?” cried Brown; then drawing closer, the smile faded from his lips as he perceived that his friend’s face was deadly pale, while his eyes glittered strangely.

“Why, what has happened, McCready? What has come over you? and,” glancing quickly around the room: “Where is the little housekeeper?”

“God only knows!” was the actor’s reply. “I can find no trace of her. Which of you was last to leave home to-day?”

“I was,” cried Scratch, “and that brings back this recollection. Rolina went out quite early this morning to make some purchases, as I understood her to say, and she told me not to mind if she was not back when I wanted to leave, as we each have a key.”

“Yes—yes!” said McCready eagerly, as Scratch paused for a moment. “When did you leave the house?”

“About 11:30. She had not returned, but I supposed of course she was all safe.”

“But she is not all safe!” McCready exclaimed in tones of thrilling apprehension. “Not safe for a mo-

ment while away from our protection. She has been back once, for here is her basket—but what has become of her since who can tell? Oh, righteous Father,” he said, raising his eyes in an agony of supplication, “whose tender care is over all thy little ones, guard and defend that innocent child, keep her from danger, and restore her to us once more.”

“Amen,” was the fervent response; and as if in immediate answer to their prayer, Brown, casting his eye aimlessly along the floor, spied a small piece of paper which he seized and held up to the light.

“What is that?” said McCready stepping eagerly forward.

“Perhaps a clew. Let me see what it says.”

“Allow *me*,” and McCready’s trembling hand received the slip of paper on which the advertisement was printed, and that had inadvertently fallen from Rolina’s pocket on her return home at noon.

“This may afford a clew,” he said with an accent of intense relief. “An advertisement for salesgirls. Can she have applied for the place? the dear, devoted, rash, imprudent little creature! But where is she now? Even if she had obtained employment there, she ought to be home by this time, and that she expected to be, is evident from her having purchased and brought in these things for supper. I will go at once to that store, and see if anything can be learned. You both remain until I come back. The Lord grant she may be found.”

As soon as McCready had gone Brown remarked to Scratch that he would go down and interview Mrs. Blowover. She might possibly know something in regard to the cause of Rolina’s absence.

The demands of laughter are often inexorable, and are, unfortunately, in open defiance of feelings and circumstances that strictly repel anything like levity or

mirth. Brown returned in a few moments, trying to restrain a nervous and embarrassing laugh.

"What has happened?" said Scratch. "Have you found the child?"

"Assuredly not," said the author. "But I have done something much worse."

"You could scarcely have done anything better," said his companion. "But let us know what you have accomplished."

"Well, Scratch, just this. In my excitement and haste, I thoughtlessly bolted into the landlady's parlor *sans ceremonie*, and in doing so, unluckily precipitated a most disastrous *contretemps*. Do you remember that funeral-maker, Musty?"

"I am not like to forget him. What else?"

"He is now down there with the widow, unless he has gone since I left. My sudden ingression interrupted a movement which, had it been permitted to culminate in a normal direction, would inevitably have resulted in a most romantic embrace."

"But allowing your untimely intromission to take its place as a factor in the equation, what then?"

"A very different result. Musty seized his hat suddenly, but was stopped by a restraining glance from Mrs. Blowover, who, with her elbows on her hips and her hands on her shoulders, instantly faced me with a defiant look which said: 'What are you here for?' I told her and left."

"With no answer?" said Scratch anxiously.

"Simply the words: 'Mr. Brown, if you have delivered the whole of your communication, you can withdraw,' and the widow pointed to the door with a stately and reproving command there was no gainsaying. I withdrew. And now, Scratch, let me tell you, this awkward occurrence, so disastrous to the widow,

deferring by five minutes, at least, the affectionate embrace she was about to receive, has cut square across the current of my thoughts, and given them a new departure. Rolina's absence is a just cause for anxiety, but I do not believe anything very serious has happened. It is never best to take the worst view of anything beyond our control until the worst comes to view. Rolina is a shrewd, sensible girl, and young as she is, is not likely to have got into any trouble out of which she will not come unharmed. Hope, which always looks at the bright side of the cloud, gives more energy and strength than despair."

McCready's steps were heard on the stairs at this moment and the little remnant of the mirthful expression their faces had been forced to assume a few minutes before was instantly dissipated.

"Well?" they exclaimed simultaneously. "Any news?"

"Yes, and bad news—but not the worst. When I reached the store, I found, as I feared, that it was closed for the day, but there was a small knot of clerks standing by the door, evidently discussing some question of more than usual interest. I stood and listened as long as I could stand it, and then walked boldly up to the most talkative of them and asked if any one answering Rolina's description had been there. I then learned that she had secured employment as salesgirl at four dollars a week; had been there to-day, and had worked until the prescribed hour, and then was dismissed for improper behavior. When I asked what that was, my confidant became mysteriously taciturn, and all I could gain was that she was in a safe place, and was likely to stay there for awhile.

"And was that all you could learn?" asked Brown, his impatience at fever heat?"

"No, not all. I was turning away, knowing that those fellows were withholding from me some important secrets, when a lad about fourteen years of age brushed by me, and managed as he did so to slip into my hand this slip of paper, on which he had scrawled the words: 'That girl has been taken to the station house. She struck one of the clerks. Don't look at me, and don't ask me anything, or I will lose my place.' That was all, and as I turned away my informant was talking and laughing with his fellow clerks, who had fortunately not noticed his benevolent act toward me. Of course it is useless to try to do any thing more to-night. We must find the dear child to-morrow, and get her out of her trouble."

Slowly and wearily the hours of that night passed over the heads of the sleepless trio. While that dear child, with her affectionate ways, her brave and resolute spirit, and her untiring energy and industry, was with those friends, they were, it is true, accustomed to bestow upon her, both in sentiment and expression, many generous encomiums. But now she had been suddenly snatched from them, and subjected to the indignity of being shut up, for one night, at least, in some prison cell, beyond their reach, and on a charge that they knew could involve no wrong act on her part.

As they sat there in their common room now so desolate and counted the hours as they dragged along, while speculating on the sad and strange trial that had befallen their little friend, they realized as they never had before the hold that orphan girl had gained upon their hearts—the cruel void which her absence made, and the irreparable loss that separation from her would involve; and the irresistible, almost absolute power that one feeble girl, standing yet on the dividing line between childhood and womanhood, had obtained over

them by her earnest life, consistent truthfulness and sincerity of character. The light of her simple integrity and innocence had shone before them with a pure, steady flame, imparting an influence at once delightful and ennobling, and these men, the mere footballs, as it were, of adverse fortunes, had bowed instinctively in reverence to her gentle worth, and from the creature had been lifting their hearts in gratitude to the Creator who had led this young messenger of faithfulness and love into their midst.

Little did the child know that while under the feelings of grateful affection to those noble-hearted friends whose charity had afforded her an honorable and happy home, her inner nature had been unfolding like a flower in the light of the truths of that Sacred Book, Harcourt's dying legacy to his friends, and pondered over by more than one of them, often and earnestly—her example and developing character had been the index finger to the true way of life. And He, in whose name those few hearts had been of late almost unconsciously drawing together, was not far from their midst.

Some one has said that religious men pray habitually, and irreligious men only when in trouble. That sentiment should be carefully dissected before it is sent to the embalmer to be preserved for the use of posterity.

We do not admit that these three friends were irreligious, in the proper sense of the term, nor are we disposed to apologize for saying that on that special occasion, before retiring for a little rest just before daybreak, they all knelt down together, while McCready offered an earnest prayer for the protection and return of their dear little friend.

It is not often necessary to go farther down than Pandemonium to find a parallel to the scenes in the criminal courts in New York.

The central figure is the bald-headed judge sitting behind his desk, his shirt front ablaze with sparkles of light emanating from the diamond stud on his bosom, which may have been presented to his honor by some enterprising adventurer in criminal matters who believes that judges are cheaper than lawyers.

The next figure in the group, and second in importance, is the clerk, always gracious and smiling, because it is his professional duty to be so. The constant habit of carrying his pen between the tip of his right ear and the side of his head has caused that ear to stand out further than ears generally do; but he had no other peculiarities that would be noticed. He sometimes wears a small diamond stud on his bosom, but never a large one—that being the judicial prerogative, which should not be infringed by subordinates.

Other officials of a lower rank take on no airs, but are required to be very obsequious in order to create the impression that the man behind the diamond stud is a person of unusual importance.

The crier is allowed to give a large volume to his stentorian tones, but that is his professional duty. He is a modest man out of the courtroom, and never drinks anything stronger than whisky.

The spectators, whether few or many, are generally divided into two classes—those who eat peanuts, and those who do not. The latter class smoke. The criminal lawyers, more respectfully addressed as attorneys practicing at the criminal courts, come in to assist in completing the picture.

The poor prisoners, brought in from their cells or picked up on the streets and huddled together in the "coop" like cattle in the shambles, give this little side show its finishing touch; but the coarse ribaldry and vulgar jokes that are thrown around among those un-

fortunate creatures, men and boys, women and girls, betoken habits somewhat lower than beasts, properly cared for, generally exhibit.

Among those prisoners, in the furthest corner of the "coop," Rolina Vernon sat trembling with an undefined apprehension of some terrible calamity impending. She could not realize that she had done anything wrong in trying to defend herself when basely insulted. But the people around her were all strangers—she did not know what charges those clerks might make against her, or what the judge might be made to believe. She had heard that innocent people were often sent to prison and kept there, while the persons who really committed the crimes lived in fine houses and had plenty of money. The poor girl bowed her head and burst into tears when she reflected how terrible it would be to be sent off to prison and left there for want of some one to tell the judge the real truth in regard to the way she had been treated, and why she struck that insolent fellow.

"See that little fool crying," said the depraved creatures around her whom fate had made her companions for the time.

The stentorian injunction "Order in the K'ourt!" rang through the room; and three satellites echoed: "Order in the K'ourt!"

Hats were off in an instant—peanuts and cigars disappeared—and all eyes were directed to the man behind the diamond stud, whose words were to seal the fate of the poor creatures in the "coop."

As the clerk read the roll the prisoners came forward, and each was disposed of in a way that the court considered lawful and right. A good breakfast, a smoke, and three drinks of brandy, had sharpened the legal acumen of the dispenser of justice, and he seemed

to know at a glance exactly what to do in each case. At last the name of Rolina Vernon was called.

Trembling with excitement, and oppressed with the feeling that seems so much like shame because awakened by a consciousness of being an object of reproach, though undeserved, Rolina was led to the bar. The charge having been read, she was directed to answer "Guilty or not guilty," when the poor girl, summoning all her resolution replied:

"I struck that man as hard as I could, and he knows what for. Does that make me guilty?"

"Order in the K'ourt!" said the crier; and the three responders echoed: "Order in the K'ourt!"

Rolina's answer had created an audible smile.

"She pleads guilty," said the judge. "Ten dollars, or thirty days"—with a glance at Nicodemus Grimshaw, who had come in just before the case was called, and now with a responsive look and a barely perceptible depression of his chin, signified to his esteemed friend the judge his acquiescence in the justice of the sentence.

"And now," said the man who had been placed behind the diamond stud to defend the public, but more especially good men like Grimshaw and his clerk from being injured by little girls like Rolina; "now, girl, let this be a solemn warning to you, and remember that you are indebted for this light sentence to your kind-hearted and humane employer, who has not been disposed to bring forward any additional testimony beyond your own admission of guilt. Next case."

"Has the sentence just announced been placed on the records, your honor?" said Theodore Hastings, a young lawyer, who came forward hurriedly at this crisis. "I have been retained to appear for the defense of Miss Rolina Vernon, and am here an hour before the time

when, as I was informed by a note from the clerk, her case would be reached."

The clerk addressing the judge, and with a quick, apprehensive glance at Mr. Grimshaw, at whose special request the case had been called as soon as he came in, remarked that the sentence had not yet been recorded.

"The case is still open," announced his honor. "But the court has no time to lose in a matter of so little importance."

"I have a witness here to place on the stand," said Mr. Hastings. "Will Arthur Glenn please come forward?"

Mr. Glenn, who was known to the judge, and some other members of the court, testified that he had incidentally witnessed all that occurred at the time of the alleged offense. The girl had simply defended herself, as well as she could, against a shameful and indecent assault. She had struck the miscreant with all her might, but unfortunately had done him no harm.

To the question had he any personal interest in the case Mr. Glenn replied not the least except what common humanity prompted. He had never seen the young woman until last evening at Grimshaw's, but had deemed the matter of sufficient importance to instruct his attorney, Mr. Hastings, to appear for the girl, and he had come also himself as a witness.

"If the court please, I ask a dismissal of this case on its merits," said Mr. Hastings.

"But the court does not please to dispose of the case in that way," said the man behind the diamond stud, with an eye on Grimshaw. "Some respect is due to the character and standing of the eminent merchant at whose place of business the offense was committed. But," a knowing look passing meantime, each way, "as Mr. Grimshaw does not seem disposed to

press the charge, the court orders the release of the unfortunate girl until brought in for some other offence. Sentence reserved. Next case."

"A moment more, if your honor please," said Mr. Hastings.

"The court will hear nothing more in this case," said the man behind the diamond stud.

"Then a higher court will!" said Mr. Hastings, his eyes sending out one of those flashes revealing the presence of a will that seldom fails to bring down the man who attempts to assume an authority that the law does not give him.

"Silence in the K'ourt!" said the crier; and three responsive voices would have been heard, but were drowned by the cheers of the spectators.

The judge rapped for order, and said sulkily:

"Go on! be brief!"

"As brief, your honor," said Mr. Hastings, "as the importance of the case will permit. The legal rights of Rolina Vernon are just as sacred as those of Nicodemus Grimshaw. In defense of these rights, and in the name of justice and law, we demand an absolute dismissal of this case, on its merits, or a trial by jury. The last we prefer——"

"And shall have," interposed the judge. "The prisoner is remanded for trial; bail, five hundred dollars."

"For which my certified check shall be placed in the hands of the clerk," was the equally prompt response of Mr. Glenn, as he drew out his wallet. "Although, if your honor will permit me to say so, the bail seems out of all proportion to the magnitude of the offence charged."

An imploring glance from the great and good merchant, conveyed to his friend behind the diamond stud, the instruction:

"Some other disposal of this case if possible."

"As the order of the court," said the judge, "has not yet been recorded, the case is still open for further consideration. Although of no importance whatever, in itself, it seems to involve principles that deserve to be more fully considered. Have you anything more to say, Mr. Hastings?"

"Simply to express the hope that your honor will not reverse the order just made, but will let the case go before a jury. That disposition of the case, we especially desire, not simply for the sake of Rolina Vernon, on whose name we do not intend to permit even the shadow of a blemish to be left on the records of any court in this city, because of what she did last evening at Grimshaw's—but in addition to her full and absolute vindication we wish also to show that the treatment this innocent and artless girl received is a sample of the way many others have been treated at the same place."

"Order in the K'ourt," said the crier, endeavoring to restrain the applause again commencing.

"Order! order!" said the judge, addressing Mr. Hastings. "Your remarks, sir, are entirely out of place—they have no relation to the case before us—none whatever. Your damaging charges against Mr. Grimshaw are not entertained nor believed; and even if they were true, you have no right to make them at this time and place. Have you anything more to say on the merits of the case?"

"Simply to repeat my request that your honor's order will not be revoked, and that the case will be allowed to go before a jury."

Another imploring look from Grimshaw brought from his honor the response:

"Your request, Mr. Hastings, is not granted. The

case is dismissed on its merits, and your young client is released."

A considerable part of what had been said had no intelligible meaning to Rolina, who had never been in a courtroom before, either voluntarily or otherwise; but she knew that in some unexpected way friends had gathered around her, whom she had never before seen, and that a way was being prepared for her escape.

Her eyes, though suffused with tears, had been sparkling with joy, and just when she was beginning to wish more and more earnestly that her friends at home could know that she was coming out of that trouble, and would soon be with them again, she saw McCready himself enter the courtroom. With a strong effort she restrained herself from an exclamation of joy. She would have rushed to him at once, but knew that she must not. McCready had come in time to hear most of the defense, and to witness her release; but neither of them had an opportunity to thank Mr. Glenn, who as soon as his point was gained left the courtroom as quickly and quietly as he had entered it.

The judge's labors on this occasion had been severe and long continued. His judicial learning had been taxed almost to the limit beyond which it would have given out altogether. The other prisoners who had been waiting in the "coop" were accordingly remanded until the next day; and feeling in great need of a "levation" he took the arm of his esteemed friend Nicodemus Grimshaw, and the two worthies repaired to a sample room.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE FIRST DOWNWARD STEP.

SAMUEL JONES made the best of his way home from the scene of his defeat considerably crestfallen, but without any intention of relinquishing the golden prize for the attainment of which he had spent his last dollar, and had pushed his credit to the point beyond which it would not go, even with a gambler's honor to protect it.

Two powerful motives prompted him in this exciting chase. In the first place he wanted and was determined to have a portion of that old man's money—how much would depend upon his own *finesse*, and the influence he would be able to exert over the infatuated girl; and in the next place, his professional reputation was involved in the issue. He had had some experience in playing love games, and was sure that his would prove the winning hand in this instance provided he played his hand right. The queen of trumps he certainly held, and meant to make the most he could of that card.

"I'll see this little game through, now I've started in it," he muttered between his clinched teeth. "If Sam Jones allows himself to be euchered by old Grimshaw he's not the sort of a man those who know him take him to be. How much better is he than I am, I'd like to know; I cheat at cards, and he cheats in what he calls 'business' and where I make a hundred dollars he



ARABELLA.

often makes a thousand at the same kind of game, although he calls it by a different name. No, my fine gentleman; I'll make you eat your words while I help spend some of your stealings that you call 'profits.' "

The next thing to do in that particular line was to indite an epistle to his dear Arabella, and the above were some of the thoughts that were running through the mind of Mr. Samuel Jones during the two hours that intervened between his unceremonious departure from the Grimshaw mansion, and the writing of that letter; the delay being occasioned by the necessity of finding some one willing to lend him a dollar to tide him onward through the remainder of the day. He found the man at last in the person of one of those stoical philosophers who believe that all things relating to debt and credit are governed by the law of chance. He happened to have a dollar to risk on the experiment, so he passed it out with sublime indifference, and dropped the remembrance of it forever.

Mr. Jones was now ready for work. The first break he made in his dollar was for three highly perfumed sheets of French note paper and as many envelopes to match. The letter was soon written and on its way to the girl he loved.

For two hours and a half Arabella lay in a despairing heap on the bed where she had flung herself, her face buried in the pillows, and her frame convulsed with angry sobs; while her passion now and then broke out into words.

"A cruel, heartless world. Nobody had ever been born into a worse one. She wished she was dead—or come to think of it, it would be better if everybody else was dead except herself and her beloved Samuel—then they could be married fifty times over if they had a mind to, and live happily together and have no hateful,

tyrannical old father to separate them and forbid them from seeing each other! Oh dear, oh dear!" And finally, getting tired of heaping maledictions upon her father, her thoughts turned to her lover, and with that consistency and good sense which were most conspicuously lacking from the catalogue of this young lady's characteristics, she turned the tide of her ill humor upon his devoted head. "Why had he not at once and without a moment's delay made everything all right, and released her triumphantly from every trouble, and difficulty?" When leaving her that morning, he had whispered in her ear the single word—"Wait!" "But how long did he expect her to wait, wait, wait?" she demanded as she raised her head from the pillow and wiped her swollen eyes. "How she did hate that word, 'wait.' She did not believe he cared a pin for her, after all; for if he did, why did he not at least send her some sort of a message? That was what she wanted to know."

But neither echo nor any one else returned any satisfactory answer to these slightly incoherent questions, and she threw herself down again in despair, and cried harder than ever.

She was still engaged in this amiable and extremely exhilarating divertimento, when she was aroused by a knock at her door, and in response to her surly "come in," a servant entered and handed her a letter. That letter was too precious to be instantly opened. It was pressed to her bosom and then to her lips, while a hundred blessings were invoked upon the head and heart of the darling man who had written and sent it so soon. But her anxiety to know its contents soon reached a climax of blissful agony. She could wait no longer; and tenderly breaking the seal, she read:

“IDOL OF MY HEART: ‘Oh, the darling, *darling*, creature.’ My heart was wrung with emotions of the deepest distress at being compelled to tear myself away from you this morning—‘the old love.’—‘I now hasten to assure you of my firm resolve never to relinquish the prize I have won in your own lovely self. Never, adored one, I swear it!—Yes, yes, and I swear it too!’—Never, while this heart continues to beat, will I prove faithless to you.—‘No, nor I to you!’—I have no time to write now, except to say that toward evening I will meet you at the lower end of your garden. I will come in from the side street, through the little gate, and then I will make known my plans. Adieu, beloved one! Patience for a few hours longer!

“Your adoring and faithful SAMUEL.”

The happy girl pressed the epistle again and again to her lips, and danced around the room in a transport of joy.

“Oh, you dear, darling letter! and you dearer and more darling man to write it! What a wicked, cruel girl I was to say you had forgotten me. I’ll show that hateful old father of mine that I will be true to my Samuel no matter what he says or does.”

Arabella passed the remainder of that day in tremulous and joyful expectancy, and about the appointed time repaired to the garden, whose trees and high, flowering shrubs afforded a convenient lover’s retreat, with the least possible danger of discovery. She was pacing back and forth along the little path in front of the gate, when a cautious step was heard outside—the gate was quickly opened—and in another moment the lovers were in each other’s arms.

“My darling!” murmured Mr. Jones, as soon as his overpowered feelings permitted him to speak. “My darling!” he repeated regarding the blushing and delighted girl with a look of undying devotion. “I am a tardy lover, after all, but I know my dear Juliet will forgive me.”

"Of course I will, Romeo," said Arabella, leading him to a small arbor near by. "We are just like Romeo and Juliet, are we not? Only you have no cruel father to interfere with you. But now tell me, my dear Samuel, what you are going to do?"

"Well, darling," said Mr. Jones, stroking her hand between his own, "this is my plan. You must pretend to be perfectly submissive to your father's commands. Let him suppose that you have given me up entirely, and ceased to care about me. You will by this means throw him off his guard, and prevent his watching you, and we can then meet at such times and places as I shall appoint. I will address you as 'Juliet' through the *Herald* personals."

"Yes, darling Romeo!"

"One point more, dear Juliet. When your father's resentment cools, as it will, within a few weeks, undoubtedly, I will repeat my request for your hand. If he consents, very well—if not—we will wait until that time comes, and then make further arrangements. Does that please my dear Juliet?"

"It's delightful, dear Romeo; perfectly delightful!" responded Arabella, to whom anything savoring of intrigue possessed a peculiar attraction. "No one can find us out, and we will have our own way in spite of him and every one else. You have made me so happy. You are the best, dearest man that ever lived."

"Well, have patience a little while longer, my darling Juliet, and then if your father still persists in endeavoring to blight our happiness, we will take the matter into our own hands." Then bending and kissing the excited girl, he added: "I knew my Arabella would be true to me. But I must go now. I do hate to leave you. Moreover it will be best for us not to meet again for several days. Try and regain your

father's good graces as soon as you can, and I will appoint our next meeting through the *Herald*. Good-by, don't forget anything I have told you."

"Good-by, dear Romeo—darling Samuel," Arabella replied, throwing herself into his arms. "I will forget nothing and I will make no blunders. I have had my own way all my life, thus far, and father shall find out that I will have it this time as well."

Having witnessed the reluctant departure of her lover, with all the tender sympathy that the occasion required, and closed the gate after him, but not until after she had drawn him back again and again for just one more last kiss, Arabella returned to her room, her cheeks glowing and her eyes sparkling with excitement. The next thing in order was to write a penitent note to her dear father, which she dispatched to him as soon as she knew that he had come home. This act of filial contrition brought her an immediate summons to meet him in the supper room. As she entered the apartment, with eyes downcast, and every appearance of penitence, Mr. Grimshaw came forward, and lifting her drooping face, kissed her affectionately. He allowed her to stand by him a few moments, while she sobbed on his shoulder, and then tenderly led her to a chair.

"I am glad, my dear daughter, very glad indeed, to find you disposed to be obedient to my wishes," he said, regarding her with genuine relief. "I would rather lose half my fortune, large as it is, than have you become the wife of that man. To-morrow I will give you my reasons more fully; in the meantime, let me commend your obedience, and assure you that you will lose nothing by it."

Arabella embraced and kissed her father, and then taking her accustomed seat at the table, exerted herself

to be as interesting as possible, at the same time secretly congratulating herself at the ease with which she had hoodwinked him. She continued to observe an humble and submissive deportment, at the same time keeping a close watch upon the daily papers. The expected *personal* appeared at last; and under pretence of going out shopping she hastened to the appointed place.

Matters went on in this way for some time. Mr. Grimshaw had explained to Arabella his objections against Jones, giving her a brief synopsis of his character, the worst half of which she did not believe, and in regard to the other half, she did not care whether it was true or not. One could not expect men to be saints and angels, she commented silently; her Samuel was good enough for her, and she did not intend to be scared into giving him up. But she pretended to listen to her father with an air of the meekest acquiescence, and without a word of audible dissent. Grimshaw, in the meantime, was never tired of congratulating himself upon the masterly manner in which he had nipped that ill-starred infatuation in the bud, and not only asserted but maintained his parental authority. At the same time, the clandestine interviews between Romeo and Juliet were becoming more and more frequent, and more delightfully romantic.

One day, however, Arabella had the misfortune to sprain her ankle, which proved so painful that she was unable to go out and meet her lover at the appointed place. This disappointment brought on a distressing fit of hysterics; but neither sobs nor convulsions proved of any avail. The sprained ankle would take its own time to get well, and it was likely to be a much longer time than Arabella was willing to wait; so to meet the emergency, she dispatched a note to Romeo, telling him of the accident, and her inability to go far from

home, but that she could manage to crawl down to the garden where he *must* come and meet her.

Romeo had some misgivings as to the safety of that trysting place. He did not like to incur the possible danger of encountering the merchant again, without first ascertaining in some way that the coast was clear; but then again he deemed it no less hazardous to refuse compliance with his lady-love's request. So Romeo was on hand at the appointed time, and Juliet, descending to the garden, reposed once more on her lover's shoulder, and breathed into his sympathetic ear the misfortune that cruel fate had inflicted upon her, since they last met. "Oh, Romeo!" she exclaimed, as she finished her list of grievances. "If it were not for you I should be the most miserable being alive. As it is, I—oh! oh!"

A step on the grass just outside the arbor arrested her words, and turning in terrified surprise she found herself confronted by her father. For a moment Mr. Grimshaw with clinched teeth and compressed lips gazed upon the guilty pair; then striding to his daughter's side, he seized her arm savagely.

"So!" he hissed, with a side look at Jones, which, had its power been equal to its meaning, would have stretched him dead at his feet. "This is your submission, your obedience! And this vile fellow has encouraged and aided your deceit and rebellion, you artful girl—" and the blood in Arabella's face came down to the rescue of her arm, that was held with a grip that seemed more and more like the last turn of a vise. "But my eyes are opened, just in time! And you, sirrah!" turning to the discomfited Jones, "have thrown your last card in this little game. At the peril of your life, let me never see you on my premises or near my daughter again!"

The man who disarms the father of the girl he loves, and places the old gentleman *hors de combat* whenever he essays a forcible interference, may not have much of the virtue of resignation, but he at least has the old Roman virtue of courage, without which, no man is fit for a husband; while a girl whose lover trembles and moves off when an infuriated father puts himself in the foreground, has fair warning that she had best dispense with that lover altogether.

Mr. Grimshaw left the garden dragging his daughter with him, quite forgetful of her sprained ankle; while Jones, after contriving to exchange a significant glance with his *inamorata* slunk off, like the whipped cur that he was.

A storm came on as soon as the father and daughter had entered the house, which ended only when the passions that incited to aggression on the one hand and resistance on the other, had exhausted their forces and could do nothing more.

Arabella was immediately consigned to solitary confinement in her own room, to remain there until she should give evidence of thorough and genuine contrition and repentance. She did not repent, nor did she remain there forever.

CHAPTER XV.

THE FIRST REHEARSAL.

"Society itself, which should create
Kindness, destroys what little we have got;
To feel for none is the true social art
Of the world's stoics—men without a heart."

—Byron.

THE company cast for the rendering of "She Stoops to Conquer," augmented by those present at the previous meeting, assembled at Mrs. Newcome's for the first rehearsal and a maturing of plans.

"Now, friends, if you please, are all here?" said Mrs. Ormsby, after some desultory conversation had been indulged in. Mrs. Ormsby's cheeks were flushed with pleasurable excitement, and her dark eyes shone with unwonted brilliancy as she glanced through the room.

Producing a slip of paper from a book in her hand, she read off the several characters, who responded promptly. Lord Gordon and Bessie Ormsby were at the farther end of the room, my lord trying, as usual, to make himself very agreeable, and Bessie sitting in that attitude of listless half-consciousness, with the shadow upon her young face resting there more heavily than ever.

"Come, we are called," said the nobleman, as Mrs. Ormsby read their names, at the same time offering his arm. "Allow me."

"I think I can walk that far without assistance,

Lord Gordon," answered Bessie, endeavoring to conceal her repugnance to his touch, under an assumption of humor.

But whatever qualities my lord might be deficient in, he did not lack a very stubborn will, which showed itself on this occasion, in the tones of his voice, despite the deprecating tenor of his words.

"Miss Ormsby will not unkindly deny me that privilege," and drawing her hand through his arm, he led her forward.

"Two seconds late, my lord," Mrs. Ormsby exclaimed, shaking her finger at him merrily. "I shall exact a fine for any tardiness on the part of my pupils. But now for our play, and let each one do his best." She threw a significant glance at Bessie, whose hand the young lord had not released from his arm; while Mrs. Glenn, glancing involuntarily up, caught the look of utter hopeless despondency that had settled down upon the girl's fair face, and which caused her own heart to swell with sympathetic pain.

But the luxury of giving free, relieving vent to painful emotions, is often denied to those who suffer most keenly; and Bessie, feeling her mother's eye still upon her, strove to cast off the gloom that oppressed her, and appear gay and cheerful. The rehearsal elicited the most enthusiastic applause of the audience. Mrs. Ormsby and Colonel Allen were pronounced perfection in their rôles, while the others were awarded their full meed of praise.

"I think Mrs. Ormsby's conduct toward Colonel Allen is enough to raise a scandal!" whispered Mrs. Bainbridge to Mrs. Overton, both of whom felt slightly piqued at not having been cast in the piece. "See the tones and glances she throws in, under cover of the play! Such open flirting in a married woman is outrageous!"

If I were her husband I would give her a serious lecture or two about it."

"And I don't doubt she could hold her own pertly enough in a tilt of that kind," replied Mrs. Overton. "Besides, he is so generous and indulgent to her, and fairly worships the very ground she walks on. He has very poor taste, in my opinion."

"And the infatuation seems to be as great on the part of the colonel," said Mrs. Bainbridge. "I am sure there are enough *single* women to attract him, without his hanging around her so persistently, and making common talk."

"It's just artfulness," said Mrs. Overton with a tinge of bitterness in her tones. "It is not her extraordinary beauty—there are plenty of women in New York equally attractive. But her whole life is just like this play—a piece of acting. She knows that her husband's name and position protect her against scandal, and so she does just as she pleases."

"It is shameful. And in this comedy she has selected a few favorites, without any regard to their ability, and entirely ignored others who could have rendered the piece with much better effect. But so long as her rôle ensures her plenty of flirting with Colonel Allen she does not care for anything else."

"That is true," assented Mrs. Maylie, who sat near. "And not content with monopolizing the colonel herself, she is using every artifice to secure Lord Gordon for her daughter. And though she may be pretty, and all that, she is anything but a proper match for him, in my opinion."

And what imparted added *empressemens* to the lady's opinion was the well-known fact that she had been endeavoring for two seasons to make a brilliant match for her oldest daughter Fannie, who was one of the

many young ladies whose hopes had been raised for a short time by Lord Gordon's attentions, only to be blighted by his desertion to the standard of Mrs. Ormsby.

"Yes, and how she snubs him," remarked Mrs. Overton, who also had a daughter suffering the agonies of unavailing despair—a calamity which had, in fact, afflicted nearly all of the marriageable young ladies of the set upon which that luminary had shone for a brief period. "She doesn't seem to appreciate his attentions in the least, but those who have everything become so fastidious that nothing is quite good enough for them."

"Oh, she is proud enough of her conquest, only she does not care to let us see it. I only hope he will not repent of his choice."

"So do I," assented Mrs. Maylie devoutly. "But they are not positively engaged, so she may after all be putting on airs too soon. He has been almost as devoted to some other young ladies that I know of."

While the ladies were thus diverting themselves, Bessie, having nerved herself for the ordeal, was enacting her prescribed rôle with Lord Gordon. The excitement of the play led her occasionally to lose the remembrance of her own identity for a few moments, and the interest she showed at these times was misinterpreted by her mother, who, radiant with animation, watched her with secret satisfaction, and assurance of the success of her cherished scheme.

"There—it is over, thank goodness!" exclaimed Mrs. Bainbridge as the actors made their final bow amid a hearty round of applause. "Now we can comport ourselves again *au naturel*—unless we happen to belong to that class who are nothing unless they are acting," she added significantly.

The actors had left the temporary platform, and at

this moment Colonel Allen's clear, mellow voice rang through the apartment.

"Mrs. Overton, will you and those other ladies kindly step this way?"

An expression of gracious compliance replaced that lady's frowning look, as she quickly made her way to the colonel's side. Mrs. Ormsby, standing near the piano, with one arm around Mrs. Glenn's waist, bent her head to whisper:

"I hope the piece they have selected will be a short one, for they really have no talent at all in that line; but we have to let them take some part, or there would be no end of jealousy and dissatisfaction."

"I believe you ladies promised to favor us with a trio at our prospective entertainment," said the colonel blandly. "May we ask the privilege of hearing it now?"

"Certainly, if you will oblige me by turning over the music," Mrs. Overton answered with a jealous glance at her rival which that lady failed to catch, her attention being diverted for the moment.

"With pleasure," and handing her to the piano, he took his place at her side. As she struck the first chords, Mrs. Ormsby glanced carelessly around. A momentary elevation of her eyebrows was her only comment, and she chatted on with undiminished animation.

"That was very good!" she remarked languidly, as the performers finished; then she bent to whisper to Mrs. Glenn. "Is it not astonishing what little taste and judgment some people display? I never heard a worse rendering in my life. But there—with sudden animation—the colonel is beckoning for my song now. You'll sing next, won't you, dear?"

Mrs. Glenn did not answer. She seem like one in a

troubled dream, her heart full of pain and distress; not the least of which was caused by the attitude that Mrs. Ormsby and the colonel too evidently maintained toward each other, and the utter wretchedness that was weighing down the spirits and health of her dear young friend, Bessie Ormsby. She was not yet initiated into the code of fashionable morals, and as she witnessed the conduct of some around her, who bent over their elegantly bound prayer-books each Sabbath in the same church where she worshipped, and discerned the hollowness of their real lives and morals, her best and purest instincts arose in indignant revolt. Petty back-bitings, jealousies and cavillings formed the undercurrent of many a professed friendship, while presuming familiarities proffered by gentlemen during the rehearsal and from which the soul of a pure woman would shrink instinctively, seemed to be regarded by the most of those ladies as harmless and legitimate flirtations. These things filled the heart of our young society novice with perplexing misgivings, and made her wish more than once that she had remained at her home.

As Mrs. Ormsby ended her song, the colonel solicited one from Mrs. Glenn, who complied, winning enthusiastic eulogiums upon her voice and manner. Then the colonel appealed again to Mrs. Ormsby.

"And now, our Nilsson, let us have, 'Come into the Garden, Maud.' You render that so inimitably."

Repressing a sigh, Mrs. Glenn turned away, and seeing that Bessie Ormsby was at that moment sitting alone, she approached and took a seat beside her.

"You look weary," she said with gentle sympathy.

"I am weary," and the low tones were very weary indeed, and very touching in their pathos. "Weary in body and spirit."

Mrs. Glenn's eyes filled with tears.

"If only I could help you. I am so sorry for you."

Bessie's head drooped and a tear fell on her friend's hand. Then the pale lips moved in a whisper.

"I wish I could tell you my trouble. You seem almost like a mother."

"Years have not yet given me a mother's wisdom," said Mrs. Glenn, gently caressing the hand she held. "But perhaps I might stand in a sister's place to you. I can at least accord you my heartfelt sympathy and affection."

For a moment there was silence; then Bessie, raising her head, and gazing wistfully into the face of her friend, said:

"Tell me this. You who have entered the portals of married life can surely answer. Can anything justify a woman in marrying a man whom her whole soul repels with aversion and distrust?"

"Nothing!" Mrs. Glenn answered with solemn earnestness.

"And if that be so," said Bessie, "can any circumstances whatever justify a parent in counseling and urging her daughter to form such a marriage alliance?"

Painful as her answer might be, Mrs. Glenn felt that any attempt to escape under cover of sophistry would be disloyalty to her womanhood. She replied according to the plain truth, which no parental or other human authority can annul or destroy.

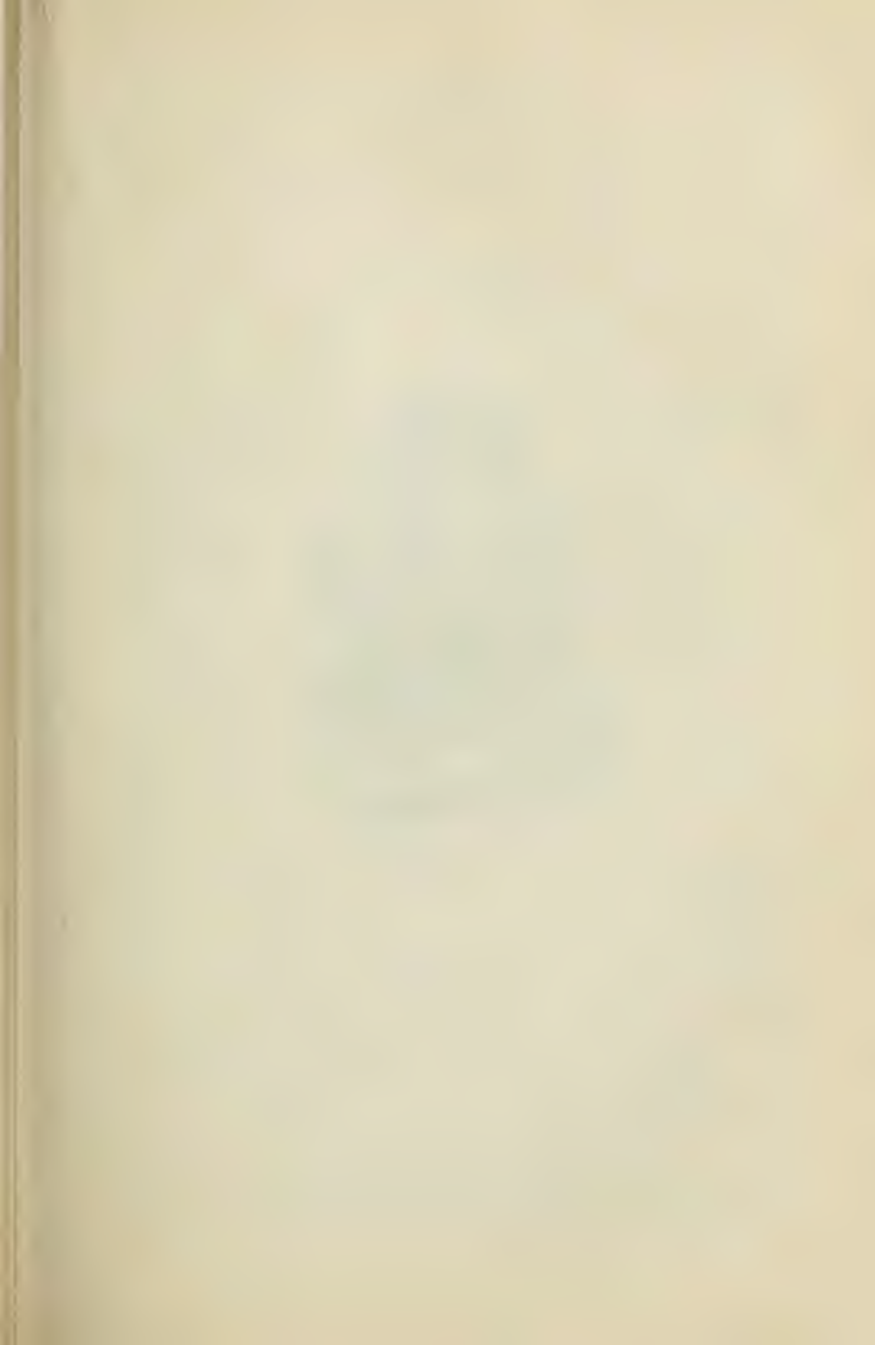
"No, certainly not! Better entomb the living body, and there let it perish and die—better do that, than consign the undying soul to a prison from which only the death of the body can release it."

"But what can one do," whispered Bessie, "when beset on all sides? What, but yield and die?"

"Never yield," was the firm response. "Keep a strong heart and high resolve and help will come in some form."

"They want us: we must all go," said Bessie, who at this moment caught her mother's signal. "I shall have no opportunity to talk with you in the carriage, but some time I will tell you more. You are such a dear, dear friend."

She drew Mrs. Glenn toward her and kissed her fondly: then pressing her hand, motioned her to join the rest. When the carriage was announced, Bessie joined the party, pale, but with an expression of composure and strengthened resolution such as her face had not worn before. The ride home was a quiet one and they parted at Mrs. Glenn's hotel.





SOPHIA PRINGLE.

CHAPTER XVI.

LOVE IN MIDDLE LIFE.

AN apology would be due to some of our *dramatis personæ* were it not that persons of more importance have been occupying our attention.

The dreams of young love are said to be beautiful; but there is a finish and grace, a completeness, a sort of enameled veneering that surrounds and sets off those tender emotions when they get at the hearts of ladies of mature age like Miss Sophia Pringle.

The Reverend Philip Glazebrook's attentions had reached a climax at last; and to give more *eclat* to the important step she had with becoming reluctance been finally induced to consent to take for his behalf and that of his dear children, the lady had decided to go to New York, for the purpose of having the ceremony performed there.

By a harmonious combination of affinital congruities, the lovers were led to procure temporary accommodation beneath the hospitable roof-tree of Madame Blowover. Two other hearts that had been pierced by the unerring and relentless arrows of Cupid had been fluttering for some time in the same hospitable retreat. One was the heart of Madame Blowover herself; the other, although now under the pericostal protection of the grave man, Mr. Musty, would also belong to the widow, in addition to the one she now had, as soon as the preliminary duties of Cupid were completed, and the arbitrary little god would permit the hymeneal

altar to transform those two hearts into one. That happy moment was just at hand. Mr. Musty had been lodged at the Blowover mansion for the last five weeks; that arrangement having been made in order to enable him to protect the widow's heart more effectually from any outside assaults. Besides, he would in that way be on hand inevitably when the time for the ceremony arrived.

Mr. Musty, like almost every one else, had been accustomed to write poetry occasionally, during the transition period between youth and manhood, when the heart does more than the head, and both together do very little. For many years that early talent had remained in a quiet and desuetudinous state, but now it became more active than ever. All the time he was able to spare from his professional duties was spent in writing sonnets, to be carefully inclosed in perfumed envelopes, and placed on the dressing table of Madame Blowover. Her maid, whose wages were small, was fortunately enabled to add nine cents a day to her salary by the sly but agreeable service of carrying and depositing these notes. The effect of these sonnets on the susceptibilities of his buxom lady-love was irresistible. They had a drawing and endearing influence, that brought her considerably nearer to him each time he met her.

We will afford the reader a sample of these billets-doux that he may see how gushingly it pours out the feelings that well up from that manly heart:

“ Ever buxom, ever fair,
No thread of silver in her hair,
Aromal sweetness in her breath,
Mine to love, mine till death,
Fairest flower, don't deem me fusty,
I long to change thy name to Musty.”

Love like misery, seeks for sympathetic communion with some one similarly afflicted—only not quite the same. No one loves the man who is cavorting around to get hold of the hand of the lady who has already placed her heart in *his* keeping. But Musty and Glazebrook were not rivals; one wanted the widow, the other the spinster. A thousand dollars thrown in by either would not have tempted the other to exchange. Having met and discovered a fellow feeling in each other, they were now kept together by the magnetic power of their respective attractions. Their sitting room was the widow's best parlor; and there we find them on the evening in question.

"Beautiful evening, Mr. Musty," Mr. Glazebrook remarked after a meditative silence. A fine drizzle was falling on the pavement outside.

"Uncommonly so," responded Musty, as he often and anxiously turned his gaze toward the door.

Another embarrassing pause. No sound save the pattering of rain, and the rumbling of passing vehicles, with an occasional sigh from the prospective bridegrooms.

"Mr. Musty, this night betokens much joy to us both. Could the late partner of my bosom look down upon the father of her children, she would bless him for committing them to the care of such a woman as Sophia Pringle. A woman, sir, among a thousand; very few equals, and absolutely no superior."

"Excuse me, Brother Glazebrook, but I must ask you to allow an exception in favor of my intended bride, Madame Blowover, relict of my departed school-mate, friend, and partner in business—a lady whose many charms have made her universally sought, and whom I have been so honored as to win as the partner of my heart. And she is right in here," placing his

hand over the region where his heart was supposed to be located. "My home, my name, my fortune are—" he would no doubt have said "hers," but at that moment the door opened, and the two happy ladies, each with an arm around the waist of the other, sidled in.

Instantly the gentlemen rose and advanced to meet them; conducted them to, and ensconced them in the two best chairs in the room, and then seated themselves as near to their respective charmers as their chairs would permit them to come. Each then threw his arm over and around the top of the chair of his lady-love; but in the case of Mr. Musty, the top of the chair served only as a very temporary stopping-place. In an instant more his arm was around the waist of Mrs. Blowover, and his lips—the reader will please excuse a detailed description of an event whose frequent occurrence has rendered it familiar to every one, save perchance himself.

Mr. Glazebrook, observing that movement, essayed to make a copy of it, but he did not make one—not then; Miss Pringle rose instantly, faced the gentleman with every appearance of modest diffidence, coupled with heroic courage.

"Mr. Glazebrook, have you forgotten that we are not yet one flesh, and that such familiarities are——"

"Just what—" and the imprudent minister would have established his position by telling the coy maiden that the liberty he desired to take was just what had been accorded to him on many former occasions, when no one was present to observe or be shocked by it. But the words were arrested by an admonitory frown from his enslaver, which restored his presence of mind.

"Mr. Glazebrook," she persisted, "you seem to have forgotten that you are a minister and I a maiden lady. Your profession should restrain you from liberties in

which other men may, perhaps, be justified in indulging; while I, also, ought not to be expected to permit the same freedom that is allowed by ladies who have already experienced matrimony. When the marriage ceremony is over, these restraints may with equal propriety be remitted."

A servant coming in at that moment to light the gas relieved Mr. Glazebrook from his awkward predicament, for he had risen and was facing his obdurate charmer in an imploring attitude, and apparently quite willing to have his friends Musty and Mrs. Blowover suppose that he had plunged himself into the maelstrom of ministerial indiscretion by kissing a lady who had never been kissed by him or any one else before. But the entrance of the servant gave a new turn to affairs.

"Come, Sister Pringle," said Mrs. Blowover. "It is nearly time to start. Let us retire and prepare ourselves for the momentous change that awaits us."

"How solemn you do speak, Sister Blowover!" said Miss Pringle, as like a startled fawn she rose and beat a precipitate retreat, while Mrs. Blowover, from the superior altitude of a more extended experience, smiled serenely at her friends and decorously bowed herself out.

The lovers looked after them with a regretful sigh, and then sat quietly awaiting further developments.

"The time now passing," observed Mr. Glazebrook at last, "should be filled in with something appropriate. Shall we sign some hymns?"

"I cannot sing, Brother Glazebrook," said Musty "But I can whistle several good funeral tunes, and they would I think be quite appropriate—a change of state, you know. Moreover, the approaching nuptials remind me of the death of my late partner."

"And me of mine," said Glazebrook; and as each

wiped a retrospective tear, the singing began, the whistling being added by Musty as a convenient accompaniment.

This pleasant diversion continued until half a dozen funeral hymns had been sung, and as many whistling obligatos had been given, the singing and whistling growing stronger and louder, when the door suddenly opened again. But being deeply absorbed in their musical performance, the gentlemen failed to take note of the intrusion, or notice the twin graces standing in their presence, each in the most tender and affectionate manner supporting the other. At last, however, as the expiring reverberations of the last funeral notes died away, there dawned upon the vision of the waiting lovers the appearance of two bright, angelic forms, clothed in spotless white.

The lovers gazed for a moment in rapt admiration; but Mrs. Blowover at once dispelled the gloom that the funeral music had gathered by saying:

"Come, my dear Musty, tell your love how she looks," at the same time pirouetting before him.

"Angelic!" was his enthusiastic response.

Musty's ideas of the appearance of angels had been obtained, in most part, from seeing the pictures on church walls, whose striking resemblance to butterflies of enormous dimensions rendered his comparison not altogether unappropriate.

Mrs. Blowover accepted his verdict, however, without demur. Kissing was now out of the question—too many ruffles and ribbons in the way. Mrs. Blowover did not even ask her lover to kiss her, but simply puckered up her mouth, and made a suggestive inclination toward him, which he returned by balancing himself on tiptoe, and throwing a kiss from the ends of his fingers. Mr. Glazebrook followed his example as well as he could, and received only a very gentle reproof.

This part of the programme being ended the man of death took his prospective bride under his protecting wing, and descended to the carriage, closely followed by the Reverend Philip Glazebrook escorting Miss Pringle.

The ceremony, so-called, was what the lovers were now after. But ceremonies are not to be lightly regarded. They are the seals that close and fasten what might be otherwise dissipated and lost.

Within the next hour Mrs. Blowover was Mrs. Musty, and Miss Pringle was Mrs. Glazebrook. With our blessing added to that of the minister, and with the reader's blessing also invoked, the happy pairs are dismissed.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE GOOD SAMARITAN.

“’Tis mercy! mercy!

The mark of heav’n impressed on human kind,
Mercy that glads the world, deals joy around,
Mercy that smoothes the dreadful brow of power,
And makes dominion light: mercy that saves,
Binds up the broken heart, and heals despair.”

—Rowe.

“AND now, Rolina,” said McCready, as the reunited quartette of friends once more gathered around their humble fire, “this has been your first, and I hope it will be your last attempt at any greater effort than our household matters require. You are too young, and your knowledge of the world is too limited for you to battle with it yet. Wait, my child, until you have more years and experience, and then if a suitable position is found where you can add something to your own comfort and support, we may perhaps let you try the experiment, provided you can do so without too great tax on your capacities, and without being subjected to cruel impositions like those from which you have now so happily been rescued.”

Rolina made no reply, but her bosom heaved, and her heart throbbed painfully. Not a word of reproach had been uttered, but when she had once more appeared among her friends, after what seemed to their anxious and longing hearts, months of separation, their joyous and enthusiastic welcome fairly bewildered her. They

received her, literally, with open arms, and no one of them was ashamed of the warm tears that flowed from his eyes, as each vied with the other in rendering her every little service that came within their reach, or that their overjoyed hearts suggested.

"We have nothing to forgive, little one," McCready said, when, ending her simple and pathetic story, Rolina craved, with tears of contrition, their pardon for the trouble and solicitude she had caused them. "Your motives were good, and the wisest of us cannot look very far ahead. But much as I commend your generous intentions, I am glad that this, your first venture, has ended in a way that will be likely to insure your remaining quietly at home, and not attempting anything of that sort again."

And for awhile Rolina felt disposed to follow his advice, but as time passed, and she noted with painful anxiety the careworn faces and scanty resources of her friends, while she, with two active hands and a willing heart, was sitting idle so large a part of the time, she realized more strongly than ever that she must, as she thought, be doing something to help them, their remonstrances to the contrary notwithstanding.

"I must be very careful, this time," she mused one morning, as she sat resting her weary little brow upon her hand. "I must not bring any more trouble on myself or my dear kind friends. But when I have found a real good place, I will coax them so hard to let me go that they cannot refuse me."

Actuated by this impulse, she took up her basket, and went out for the day's marketing. She succeeded after some little trouble in accommodating means to needs, and then as the air was fresh and invigorating, decided to extend her walk a little further.

Having turned into a broad, handsome street, and

followed it for several blocks, her attention was attracted to a large, imposing building, and she stopped to look at it. She saw a handsome structure with a white marble front ornamented with unique and tasteful designs, and with large, plate-glass windows, while immediately over the massive, highly polished entrance doors were the words:

“The Good Samaritan—An institution for affording help and relief to homeless or destitute women and girls.”

A second time Rolina read this encouraging inscription. Then the bright color leaped to her careworn face.

“I have surely found the right place now!” she exclaimed. “There cannot be any risk here, nor the least danger. These people will help me to find a situation, and I can do something to help my dear good friends. I will take my basket home, lest they might take me for a common beggar, and then try what I can do here; perhaps I may get a position of some kind before night.”

All aglow with the delightful thought, Rolina hurried home. The very name of the institution was hope-inspiring, for she had often read to her aunt the story of the “Good Samaritan,” wherein Miss Pringle always complacently traced a faithful likeness to her own case, as exemplified by her own charity toward the motherless waif. That the character and principles of those in charge of this institution would accord with the assumption so ostentatiously placed over the door, the simple hearted, credulous child did not doubt for a moment. Her path was clear now; she had only to go to these kind people, who, like the good Samaritan, were ready to do all in their power toward alleviating the sufferings of unfortunate fellow-mortals, and they would tell her just where to go and what to do. Of course they would.

Reaching home she put her purchases neatly away, and then set forth again. Timidly ascending the marble steps of the "Good Samaritan" and feeling somewhat awed and confused in the actual presence of so much magnificence, she gently pulled the silver bell-knob, and when a smartly attired man servant appeared, inquired for the principal.

"What do you say?" asked the porter impatiently. The noise made by a carriage that rolled pompously by at that moment completely drowned her slender voice.

"I would like to see the lady in charge of this institution, if you please," Rolina repeated falteringly.

"Oh! the lady directress, you mean. Walk in."

He led her into a room that seemed parlor and office combined. A soft, luxurious carpet covered the floor, lace curtains hung before the windows, and handsome chairs were disposed with artistic effect about the room. A large desk stood open, disclosing piles of business-looking papers, an inkstand, and an assortment of letter heads. Several paintings graced the walls, together with two or three engrossed certificates, handsomely framed and glazed.

While Rolina sat on the edge of a chair with her hands folded in her lap, observing these things, the door opened, and a lady of middle age, handsomely dressed, came in. The slight sound did not at first arouse the child from her day-dream, but as the lady's shadow fell across the carpet, our heroine looked up with a start.

Her fancy had pictured the lady directress as a mild, benignant lady, to whose ready sympathy she could freely confide her wants, and from whom she would receive assistance and counsel. But as she gazed upon the tall, fashionably clad figure, and into the unsympathetic gray eyes and stern features, a chill crept over

her sensitive spirit, and the confidence that had been ready to well forth, seemed suddenly frozen at its fountain.

The lady directress crossed over to the desk, sat down, and drew pen and paper toward her, then glancing up, asked in a tone that accorded perfectly with her look and manner:

"Your business, please?"

"I understand, ma'am, that this place affords help to people who need it, and I would like some help in getting a situation where I can earn a little money," Rolina replied.

"Yes? I don't know whether we can do anything for you or not. What is your name?"

"Rolina Vernon."

"You are a mere child. You cannot do anything."

"Oh, indeed I can, ma'am. I'm nearly fifteen, and I want to earn something. If you will only help me to get a place of some sort, I will be so grateful."

"Yes. Where do you live?"

Rolina mentioned the street and number.

"With your parents, I presume?"

"No, ma'am. My parents died almost before I can remember. But I have some kind friends who are poor as I am, and who are sharing their food and home with me."

The lady directress elevated her eyebrows.

"*Friends!*" she repeated, with an unpleasant emphasis on the word. "Who are they, and what is their business?"

Rolina gave the required information.

"Yes. And what do you live with *them* for?" pursued her interrogator in a colder tone than before.

Rolina had answered the lady's questions in a tone of quiet respect, but she felt that the last two were pointed

with a suspicion that was a gratuitous insult to her self-respect. Raising her eyes to the lady's face, she answered with firm resolution:

"Madam, I live with them because I have no other place to live, and no friends could be kinder or more careful of me. I am an orphan, alone and without friends, except for these I have named; and I want to do something to relieve them of the burden of my support, or at least to lighten it a little. Madam," she continued fearlessly, "I have read in my Bible that when the 'Good Samaritan' saw his neighbor in distress he helped him. I never read that he began to ask him unnecessary questions. I come here, seeking aid. I stand in great need of relief and help; and your institution bears the name of one who was a 'friend in need.' Does that mean that when you see a poor girl struggling to get an honest living, you will help her on her way? or that because she is poor, and has no one to speak for her, you will, like the priest and the Levite, 'pass by on the other side'?"

The lady directress was not quite prepared for this outburst of eloquence, and for a moment regarded our heroine in silent surprise. Rising at last, she said:

"I have no time to spare this afternoon. We generally require all applicants for our assistance to furnish responsible references. But you may call again in a few days, and if I hear of a situation, meantime, that I think would suit your abilities, I will mention your name." And a wave of her hand toward the door, informed the young applicant that the interview was considered closed.

"So that is what they call a 'charitable' institution," Rolina murmured as she walked dejectedly away. "Instead of manifesting a little sympathy and kindness, the lady sits down and cross-questions me, as if I were

some criminal. Yes, and speaks slightly of my friends," she added indignantly. "Of those who are the real 'Good Samaritans' every one of them. As for her, she did not seem to care whether I lived or died. But she told me I might come again, and I will take her at her word, and try her. She may get me a situation."

And she did try, repeatedly, only to be met on each occasion with the stereotyped refrain: "Nothing as yet."

One day, Rolina set out for a final effort, resolved, if unsuccessful this time, never to apply at that place again. She was beginning to realize that there was no disposition to render her any assistance. Had she been some young lady recently reduced in circumstances, but with enough of her former prestige remaining to secure her a good word from some wealthy individual whose patronage was worth securing, the "Good Samaritan" would have opened its portals to her most hospitably. But she was poor, alone and friendless, and there was but little chance that any assistance rendered her would become widely known, and reflect additional honor and *eclat* upon that noble institution, or that its fame would be enhanced by any favor bestowed upon this humble, insignificant member of the world's great family. So the "Good Samaritan" concluded to reserve its wine and oil for a more advantageous beneficiary, and passed her by unnoticed.

But Rolina hastened on, and reached the door of the institution. Something important was transpiring to-day—the liveried porter was unusually alert, and the door swung open before she had time to ring the bell. As she entered the hall she heard the voice of the lady directress attuned to its softest and most com-plaisant cadence, evidently addressed to some person of

distinction. Noiselessly drawing near, Rolina glanced through the partially opened door into the parlor.

The board of managers were in session, augmented by the presence of a number of visitors, and it occurred to our young heroine that she had come at just the right time. There could scarcely fail to be some one among those ladies and gentlemen who would hear and believe her story, and lend her a helping hand. Inspired by the hope that the friends she needed would be found there, she was about to pass in, when a voice replying to a remark of the lady directress, arrested her attention.

“Yes, madam! a truly laudable institution! I shall insert a notice of it in the *Reformer*, of which I have the honor to be associate editor. Verily, such noble and self-sacrificing charities must receive their due reward!”

Rolina had heard those sanctimonious accents too many times not to identify them very readily with the Reverend Mr. Glazebrook. Creeping closer to the door, she peered cautiously in—and there, sure enough, sat the identical gentleman. And oh, horrors! beside him, in a gorgeous shawl and bonnet, her face resplendent in smiles, and her eyes fixed upon her reverend partner as if he were the very *ne plus ultra* of human and masculine perfection, sat Mrs. Glazebrook, *née* Miss Sophia Pringle!

It had been by a happy combination of circumstances, that during Miss Pringle’s brief stay at the “madame’s” no allusion had been made by the latter to her garret lodgers, and a spell of stormy weather had kept Rolina indoors; so the worthy spinster had no suspicion of her proximity to her former charge; nor did Rolina suspect the daily risk she had incurred of meeting her relative in her walks to and from the “Good Samaritan.”

At the unexpected sight, a mist swam before her eyes, and it seemed as if she must fall; but controlling herself by an effort, she peered in again, her gaze being held as by some subtle fascination, upon the cold, cruel and heartless expression of the relative who, a few months before, had thrust her out of her house, and bid her never show her face there again.

Mrs. Glazebrook had long wanted to recover her little slave, so harshly and imprudently driven away, and had she suspected that the fugitive was at that moment within a few feet of her, she would instantly have asserted her claim to her, and the child, under the circumstances, would have had no way of escape.

She had left Mrs. Musty's dwelling with her husband on the day after the marriage, and the wedded pair were staying with a friend of the minister, and spending their honeymoon in sightseeing through the city, which motive had at last located them temporarily under the hospitable roof of the "Good Samaritan."

But Rolina, while of course knowing nothing of these explanatory facts, immediately realized the imminent danger that every moment was increasing; and with a silent but earnest prayer for deliverance ascending from her heart, she stepped noiselessly back, and turning the knob of the door, which was for the moment unguarded, she descended the steps, and was soon beyond the reach of that "Good Samaritan's" tender mercies!

CHAPTER XVIII.

FROM BAD TO WORSE.

“ Thereto when needed, she could weep and pray,
And when she listed she could fawn and flatter,
Now smiling smoothly like a summer’s day,
Now glooming sadly, so to cloak her matter,
Yet were her words but wind, and all her tears but water.”

—*Spenser.*

AND how fared it, meanwhile, with the forlorn and distracted “Juliet,” exiled from her lover’s arms and a prisoner in the house where she had until now, reigned the pride and belle? Badly enough, we can assure the reader.

The first three days were spent in walking distractedly up and down her apartment, tearing her hair, and venting wild and bitter imprecations upon the unsympathizing furniture and walls. The fourth day she was sullen, but less violent. On the fifth day she changed the programme, and determined to set her wits to work to contrive some way to circumvent her cruel old tyrant of a father, and gain access once more to her beloved “Romeo.”

A week had elapsed since her imprisonment, and no word as yet had come from her lover. Could he have proved false after all? Perish the thought! He was faithfulness and integrity condensed—true as the dial to the sun, the needle to the pole. And yet, although she had bribed the maid, her jailer and attendant, to

bring her the *Herald* each morning, there had appeared no notice addressed to "Juliet."

Again she asked herself: Could he have found some other girl, somewhere, whose father had more money, and was not disposed to offer any opposition to his having as much of it as he wanted, along with his daughter? What a false and foolish suspicion! Her dear Romeo would not think of any one else; no, no, not if he could have a million dollars with her.

"What have you there, Jane?" she said to her attendant, one morning, as the girl came in, hiding something under her apron.

Every emotion, every passion has its limit, which, when attained, either gives place to another, or else breaks the continuity of affection and thought, and insanity ensues. Arabella's intense anxiety was nearing a point beyond which it could not go, and relief in some form was imperative. It came, not in the destruction of her reason, which might have been a lesser calamity, but in the shape of a letter from her dear Romeo.

Mr. Grimshaw's positive injunctions to the maid to deliver to him any letters addressed to his rebellious daughter, and to do this at the peril of immediate dismissal, had been observed up to this time. She was, in fact, so careful and conscientious in the performance of that duty that she had diligently examined each letter to see if there was a small "J" on the back of the envelope; but no mark of that kind had been discovered until this morning.

But now the "J" was there for the first time, and that letter went quickly into her pocket, and was reserved for another destination.

This little transaction on the part of the maid involved the necessity of opening a small debit and credit

account with her conscience, which was balanced when Arabella received the letter and promptly handed her a dollar in exchange, with the promise of as much more every time she brought her a letter with a similar mark.

“Never mind the breakfast, now, Jane,” said the young mistress. “Leave the things just as they are. Go now, that’s a good girl—I’ll ring when I want you.”

Jane withdrew at once, thinking how nice it was to have a conscience that she could sell for a dollar.

“And now, you dear letter,” said Arabella, regarding it affectionately. “You are better than a dozen breakfasts to me and I will soon have your contents by heart.” Opening it she read:

“DEAREST JULIET: You must not think that my long silence implies forgetfulness or neglect. I can never forget or neglect you—never, while I live. I have been waiting to mature a plan for your release, and have it at last.

“Beloved Juliet, our only course is an elopement; and the best way is this. Be penitent and submissive for a few days, and in the meantime gather together your jewelry and valuables and whatever money you can lay your hands on. It will all be yours some day, by right of inheritance, and it is safer and better to make sure of some of it now. At 12 o’clock, one week from to-night, I will be under your window. Have a small ball of twine at hand, which you can throw down to me, keeping hold of one end yourself, and I will attach it to a rope that I will bring with me, and which you can draw up, fasten to your window, and then float down to my arms like the angel that you are. Have everything ready so that there may be no confusion or mistake at the last moment, and don’t fail your devoted,
ROMEO.”

Twice did Arabella read this note, then springing to her feet, clapped her hands in an ecstasy of joy.

“Such a delightful plan; an elopement, and by moonlight. Was anything more enchantingly romantic? What will my late schoolmates say when they hear of it? How they will envy me! And what a hubbub there will be here the next morning, to discover that I have outwitted them, and gone after all.”

She did not give a thought or care for her invalid mother, while it delighted her to think of the mental agony that would be suffered by her father, who, despite his harsh correction of her rebellious conduct, loved her as his very life. No emotion of filial love or obedience came to the rescue of the headstrong, infatuated girl, when about to take a step from the thought of which she might well have shrunk in horror and deadly fear. Every feeling and thought was centered on herself, and on the accomplishment of her own willful designs.

While still debating as to how she could most effectually carry out her lover's directions, a step outside her door caused her to conceal the letter hastily in her bosom. The door opened, and her father, according to his usual custom, came in to wish her good-morning, before leaving for business, and had also, several open letters in his hand, which he tendered her.

Hitherto, during her imprisonment, Arabella had acknowledged her father's entrance simply by a formal bow, not deigning to open her lips, save in the briefest replies to his questions. To-day, she rose, and with a very pretty expression of penitence, bade him good-morning, and extended her hand for the letters, with a deprecating “Thank you, father.” Surprised and delighted at this improvement, Mr. Grimshaw drew her to his breast, and kissed her tenderly.

"Arabella, your strange, rebellious conduct has grieved me more than words can describe," he said at last. "Don't you see that it has?"

"Yes, papa!" she murmured, raising her handkerchief to her eyes, to conceal a smile of sly satisfaction.

"Well, then, my daughter, let me ask you once more, for the sake of your own welfare and happiness, to renounce all further thoughts of that worthless fellow, Jones. I cannot bear to shut you up here. You don't know how lonely the house seems without you. Will you not promise to be guided by my wishes, and leave it to me to select a proper husband for you?"

"Yes, papa, I will," Arabella replied, after a little hesitation—just enough to give the semblance of sincerity to her compliance.

"Now that is my darling, sensible girl—my little Bella," said her father, kissing her again. "And I will put your filial obedience on trial once more. I will ask you to keep in your room one week longer, and then all restraint shall be removed, and you shall have a new set of jewelry, as a reward for your obedience, and if you would like it, another *fête* this coming summer. Will that please you?"

"Yes, papa," Arabella replied, meekly, but with a thrill of inward exultation as she thought how many miles would soon be placed between him and her. "I will stay here another week and longer if you want me to."

"No, my darling girl! only one more week; I cannot spare you, my Bella, any longer than that. How much comfort you have given me. I will see you again when I come home. Good-by," and with a lighter heart than he had carried in his bosom for several weeks, Mr. Grimshaw left the house.

Arabella spent a part of that day reading a new

novel that Jane had bought for her. The leading thought of the story, and the part that afforded her both comfort and encouragement was, that girls had the right always and under all circumstances to follow their own inclinations and judgment absolutely, in all matters relating to the selection of their partners for life; and that any interference or restraint on the part of parents or guardians was unwarrantable and impertinent tyranny, to evade and circumvent which any device was not only justifiable but eminently proper and commendable. She also employed a part of her time in looking over her various dresses and trinkets, and racking her brain as to the means by which she could obtain possession of a portion of the funds which she knew her father always kept in the house; with other matters that needed to be carefully considered, in order to make the contemplated elopement a perfect success.

There were some difficulties to be met and overcome. Her room door was locked day and night; and although the maid occupied the room with her, and kept the key in her pocket, Arabella knew that any attempt to get it from her would be quite certain to awaken her, and alarm the household; for the girl herself, although willing to serve both sides when not attended with too much risk, valued her position too highly to jeopardize it by aiding her young mistress in any scheme for escape.

The week was drawing to a close; the time for her lover to make his nocturnal visit, according to appointment, was at hand, and yet the means for effecting her escape in a satisfactory way had not been secured. At last, however, the momentous day arrived, and with it her evil genius came to her aid. Her father said as he kissed her for good-by that morning:

"I shall not be at home until late to-night, dear Bella, and will not see you again, as you will probably be asleep by that time; but to-morrow morning ends your incarceration, and I shall expect to see my daughter's bright face at the breakfast table. Good-by."

"Good-by, papa," Arabella answered, stifling whatever compunctions of conscience, if any, were stirring at that last moment. And Nicodemus Grimshaw, little recking of the trouble so near, went away to his business.

About 10 o'clock in the forenoon, the bellcord in Arabella's room summoned her maid, who entered and found her mistress seated in an armchair, holding her handkerchief to her face.

"Jane," she said, speaking with some difficulty. "I have a most horrible toothache—it is driving me almost crazy. Do go and ask mother to send me a little morphine to put in my tooth and lull the pain!"

Jane stood for a moment, perplexed.

"Your mother was feeling so much better this morning, Miss Arabella, that she went out for a drive. She won't get back for two hours or more."

Arabella gave vent to a groan of despair.

"Oh, I can never wait all that time," she exclaimed, rocking to and fro. "Jane, you get me the bottle yourself, and I can take out what I need. You will find it in the little cabinet on mother's dressing table."

But Jane drew back in resolute refusal.

"Oh, miss, I wouldn't dare! Mrs. Grimshaw never allows me to go into her room when she's out. And as to touching anything—it would cost me my place."

That refusal was just what Arabella desired, and she took advantage of it immediately.

"Then I must go myself—that's all. I cannot endure this torture five minutes longer. It will drive me into a fit, I know it will."

"But, Miss Arabella," returned Jane, with increasing perplexity, "master's orders, you know——"

"Your master would give you no orders to keep me in misery like this when help is so near at hand," exclaimed Arabella, stamping her foot angrily. "I shall be free after to-night—I am only staying here now to put papa in good humor—so what matter if I leave my room for a few moments? You can follow me and stand right outside of mother's room, and I give you leave to scream as loud as you please if I make the slightest attempt to go anywhere else. Come, let me go, and I will make it all right for you with father to-morrow."

Her hand had already fallen suggestively on her purse, which lay on a small table beside her, and Jane's scruples dissolved as by magic. The door was opened, and Arabella passed quickly to her mother's room, leaving Jane in the hall. The morphine, which she really wanted, though not for the toothache, was immediately secured; then going over to the bureau, she noiselessly slid out the top drawer. In a smaller compartment lay a morocco case containing a superb set of diamonds, Mr. Grimshaw's bridal gift to his wife, but which, owing to her invalid state, had been worn by her but a few times.

"These were to be part of my wedding present when I married," Arabella soliloquized, admiring the gems. "And as it will make no particular difference to mother, for she does not so much as look at them once in six months, I will take them along with me, thanking her all the same. If I can't have a grand wedding, such as I had set my heart upon, I'll at least make sure of a part of my dowry," and to assure herself that she appreciated her own cleverness, she directed a glance of approval toward her reflection in the mirror. She

then slipped the case into her pocket and left the room; her toothache returning in greater intensity than ever the moment she came again under Jane's notice.

Regaining her room, Arabella made a show to apply the remedy to her refractory tooth; then tying her face up in the most approved style she dismissed Jane, with an injunction not to disturb her until she brought up her supper.

While the afternoon was passing, Arabella busied herself collecting into the smallest compass all her jewelry, and as much wearing apparel as she could conveniently take. When Jane came with the supper she found her young mistress quite recovered. About 10:30 o'clock that evening, Arabella heard her father coming in; and when Jane appeared a few moments later to assist her young lady to disrobe, she was received in an unusually gracious manner.

"I am going to have a glass of wine before I go to bed, Jane," Arabella said gayly. "I have some here, kept ever since my grand *fête*. Shall I give you a glass, Jane?"

"Well, yes, miss, if you please," Jane answered, flattered at the favor.

"You have been so good to your poor prisoner that I intend to give you a bumper!" said Arabella, producing some glasses and at the same time slipping some of the toothache medicine into one of them. Then she filled them both to the brim.

"Here's to my freedom!" she said clinking them gently. "Drink, Jane."

The glasses were quickly drained, and in a few moments Arabella said kindly and very truly:

"Jane, I can see that you are dreadfully sleepy, and I'll not trouble you to help me undress. I can get along very well alone. Better get to bed yourself as soon as you can."

"Well, thank you miss, I guess I will," Jane replied in a drowsy tone; and rising from the chair upon which she had dropped, she staggered unsteadily to her bed in the corner, upon which she threw herself without any effort at undressing, and was soon in a heavy sleep. Arabella waited an hour longer, then stealthily approaching the maid, she secured the key, and stealing from the room, crept cautiously downstairs to her father's library. Entering, she made her way in the dark to the large desk in which Mr. Grimshaw kept such sums as he wished to have by him in the house. The draws all opened with spring locks, the secret of which Arabella shared with her father; and pressing that of the smallest compartment it slid out at once, revealing a considerable roll of bills. Hastily seizing them without stopping to count them, she thrust them into her bosom, and in the same cautious manner retraced her steps to her room. Having then secured about her person such articles as she could safely carry that way, she traced a few lines on a piece of paper which she left on the bureau. Then putting on her cloak and hat, she raised the window, which, fortunately for her purpose, opened upon the garden, and sat down beside it waiting.

At a few minutes past 12 o'clock a man leaped over the garden wall; and in a few seconds more a low, cautious whistle was heard under Arabella's window. The twine was thrown down at once, according to instructions, and the rope which he secured to it was raised and fastened to the staple of the window. Then tossing down a couple of bundles, Arabella, with a farewell glance at the scene of many happy girlhood years, fearlessly climbed out upon the window ledge, and the next moment stood beside her lover.

"You came down that rope like a thistledown so

light and swift!" said Jones as he embraced her. "Have you got everything, darling?"

"Everything," replied Arabella. "But let us hurry. There is no knowing how soon Jane may awake. I didn't dare to give her much."

"You are a brave girl!" Jones exclaimed with a look of admiration that for the time being was genuine, as he conducted her through the garden. A carriage was waiting in the next street. Arabella's lover handed her in, gave a few brief directions to the driver, and they were whirled swiftly away.

Mr. Grimshaw awoke in the morning from troubled sleep, and with a strange foreboding of evil. He arose and dressed with the feeling still strong upon him; then moved by an irresistible desire to see his daughter, went immediately to her room. Just as he lifted his hand to tap on the door it opened hastily, and Jane stood before him, terrified and in tears.

Her expression sent a thrill of horror to his heart, and without a word he tottered into the room. The folded paper on the bureau caught his eye; and taking it up, he read the brief cruel lines:

"FATHER: I have eloped with Mr. Jones, whom I was determined all the time to marry, despite any and every opposition. You need not try to follow me with the idea of preventing our marriage, for you cannot obtain the slightest clew to our whereabouts—Samuel has taken care of that. Don't blame Jane, either. I got some morphine and drugged the wine I gave her; so you see I had matters all my own way after all. Good-by! Some day, perhaps, when you feel ready to forgive her, *Mrs. Jones* may honor you with a visit. My love to ma.

ARABELLA."

Mr. Grimshaw stood as if suddenly smitten with

paralysis, and the paper fluttered from his nerveless hand to the floor. This last demonstration of his daughter's utter heartlessness and deceit, her lack of every principle of duty and honor, and her deliberate perfidy throughout, cut him to the very soul: while the unblushing defiance and audacity manifested in her reckless parting words fairly appalled him.

He had loved his only child as his very life. To have promoted what he considered her welfare he would have expended his last dollar, his last atom of strength; but rather would he have seen her lying dead before him than wedded to the man for whom she had forsaken home and honor. And now that she had deliberately and ruthlessly rent asunder every tie that had bound them so long together, and recklessly gone forth to her own destruction, the father felt that all hope of happiness for him had gone with her.

For a long time he stood in this bewildered, stupefied, despairing state. Then seeking his wife, he put the letter into her hands, and tottering to a chair, bowed his haggard face upon his arm.

Could Mrs. Vernon, whom his treachery sent forth to suffering and death so many years before, have returned to look upon this scene, she would have felt that his cup of retribution was full to overflowing.



MRS. ORMSBY.

CHAPTER XIX.

MAN AND WIFE.

"You do not appear in quite your usual spirits this morning, Oscar!" languidly remarked Mrs. Ormsby, as she placed her husband's cup of coffee on the silver salver held by the waiter, and glanced past the massive coffee urn at his handsome, thoughtful face; "is anything wrong?"

"No, nothing unusual," Mr. Ormsby answered evasively. "Martha, you may leave the room; we shall not need you for the present," he added, taking his cup; and as the girl, with an expression of silent surprise at the somewhat unusual order, laid down the salver and withdrew, he continued:

"I feel troubled, Clara—troubled and anxious; more so than I can convey to you, who are so light-hearted and care-free. A feeling of apprehensive anxiety has been gathering around me lately, and I seem unable to dissipate it."

"I cannot imagine, for my part, what you are driving at, Oscar," retorted Mrs. Ormsby pettishly. Although always expressing herself with faultless elegance of diction in society, Mrs. Ormsby occasionally allowed herself the indulgence of speaking like ordinary mortals when addressing her husband or her daughter at home.

Mr. Ormsby continued his breakfast for a few moments in silence, then pushing his plate aside, he passed his hand wearily across his forehead.

"It is the state that society is getting into that troubles me," he said finally.

"I don't see anything unusual about society," replied his wife. "I am satisfied as far as my experience with it is concerned. I don't see what you can find to complain of in that respect."

"One person may be satisfied with a state of affairs that is as gall and wormwood to another," said Mr. Ormsby with somewhat unusual emphasis.

An unpleasant sparkle shone in Mrs. Ormsby's eyes, and she let the coffee spoon that she was raising to her lips fall with a perceptible splash into her cup as she answered:

"People differently constituted see things differently as a matter of course. Does that indicate that one of them is *always* in the wrong?"

"An honest difference of opinion is not to be confounded with a reckless perversion of the laws of true order," was Mr. Ormsby's reply. He was preparing the way for the first open and emphatic expression of his disapproval of his wife's deportment. Proud and sensitive, thoroughly honorable in all his dealings, loving his wife with a whole-hearted devotion she little deserved, and cherishing that chivalric regard for women that would make him the last to impugn their motives or doubt their integrity, he had endeavored to shut his eyes to much that had troubled him in his wife's avowed principles and conduct. But he now found it impossible to retain unimpaired the high estimate he had formed of her prudence and discretion; in vain strove to blind his eyes to the truth that the wife he had chosen fell far below the ideal through which he had been accustomed to view her.

He had no fears that she would ever deliberately, or even through recklessness, dishonor him; but it was

every day becoming more apparent that certain duties and obligations which a wife should hold sacred were by her lightly esteemed if not entirely ignored.

Her position as his wife had thus far prevented remarks of a seriously damaging character from being openly made. But sly inuendoes, though not intended for his ears, had occasionally reached them; and it cut him to the heart to be compelled to realize that his wife's name was being handed about, tainted with even the least breath of slanderous suspicion. At the same time, the attempts he had made on several occasions to reach her mind with mild and cautious suggestions had been treated with utter indifference, indicating a settled determination to persist in her course of fashionable dissipation.

The duties and cares, direct and indirect, which a very extensive business imposed, including many outside trusts that could be attended to only by using a large part of his evenings, often obliged him to leave his wife the option of providing a substitute for his escort, or refusing some of the many invitations she constantly received, and remaining quietly at home until he could join her at a somewhat later hour. It is hardly necessary to state that she had invariably accepted the first horn of the dilemma, and that her escort of late had been almost invariably found in the person of Colonel Allen.

This morning Mr. Ormsby had felt unusually depressed. His wife's question, jarring painfully upon his ear, provoked his first words, which were followed by a sudden and irresistible impulse to speak his mind upon the subject which was slowly but surely creating discord between them, and removing his wife, whom he had so long honored, cherished and loved, from the high place she had occupied in his confidence and affection.

"Clara," Mr. Ormsby said gravely; "the state of society at the present time is such as ought to fill the mind of every reflecting man and woman with painful apprehensions. Religious and social peace and happiness are at the mercy of a subtle and deadly foe. The demands of society, as it is called, are taking the place of every other duty or obligation, and even the most sacred relations of domestic life are sacrificed at the shrine of this idol."

"I cannot imagine what has come over you, Mr. Ormsby," said his wife. "Your remarks are positively shocking. You must speak in a milder way if you expect me to listen to you."

"The case is one that not only admits of but demands forcible language," was the reply. "The plain truth, heard and considered now, may show how to escape sorrow, remorse, and perhaps shame, at a later day."

"What do you mean, Mr. Ormsby? Have you taken leave of your senses or is it a sudden attack of hypochondria? I never before heard such words from your lips, and it certainly is not at all an agreeable experience."

Instead of the air of languid, half-condescending indifference with which the lady had been accustomed to receive her husband's criticisms when turned in this direction, there was now a perceptible flash of indignant resentment, with a crimson spot tinting either cheek. Mrs. Ormsby was aroused, and began to realize that a spirit had been stirred in her indulgent husband that smiles of indifference were not likely to allay.

"Have you anything more to say, Mr. Ormsby?" she said with a slight touch of sarcasm, such as had been effective on one or two previous occasions in terminating a discussion in which she did not feel interested.

"Yes, my dear wife; I have a good deal more to say," was the firm but courteous response, "which I have a just right to expect you will hear with respectful attention, even if not with entire concurrence."

"Indeed."

That single word was uttered with a peculiar circumflex accent that every lady trained in fashionable society knows exactly how to give, and which when properly given, with an appropriate curl of the lip, is presumed to be a "deadener."

It was not a deadener this time, however, but was answered with a look such as Mrs. Ormsby had never received from her husband before.

"Clara," he said with grave composure, "my remarks were not designed to imply any criticism on your conduct individually, except so far as you indorse and adopt the principles and practices that enter into and form so large a part of what is called fashionable society. I must tell you plainly, Clara," he continued, leaning slightly forward, and fixing his deep, earnest eyes on his wife, "I see mischief coming—soon and terrible. And now let me ask you, candidly—you who move so much more constantly than I do in the so-called 'charmed circle' and have so much better opportunities for observing and comparing—is there no phase of its structure that causes you unpleasant apprehensions as to its soundness and stability?"

Mrs. Ormsby petulantly pushed back a tiny tress of hair that had strayed down over her forehead before replying to her husband.

"I cannot say that I quite understand your question, Oscar. I do not see that society has changed in any material respect of late years. There is the same——"

"The same round of empty ceremony," said her husband, as she paused somewhat abruptly. "The same

feuds with secret hatreds, under cover of pretended friendships. The same persistent effort to destroy the last vestige of maidenly reserve, if any should chance to be yet lurking there; the same concealed but no less fatal thrusts at marital honor and devotion. The same false, hypocritical pretense; the same indifference, in fact, to all genuine obligation, moral or religious!"

"Nonsense!" Mrs. Ormsby exclaimed, her face flushing with vexation. "What has *religion* to do with fashionable society, I should like to know? Let the ministers and churches take care of that."

"True," replied the gentleman, with a curl of his handsome lip. "It is enough that we go to our stately edifices of brick or stone one day in seven, and with our elegantly-bound prayer books open at the right place, kneel devoutly on the velvet cushions, and in low, conventional accents, confess ourselves 'miserable sinners' and that there is 'no health in us.' And then after listening to a sermon that will deal very tenderly with our shortcomings, return to our homes, shriven, and with a new lease of indulgences. Of course the penitent humiliation of that day should and does have no possible connection with the rest of the week. We have 'done up' our religion work for the next six days, and like the merchant who closes his ledger after the day's business, we shut our religion between the leaves of our prayer books, dismiss the hackneyed subject, and return with greater zest to the worship of our real god—fashionable society."

"Oscar, I consider such talk little less than blasphemy, I do indeed," said Mrs. Ormsby, assuming a very severe look. "I am sure it would shock Dr. Simpcox to hear you."

"While the gift of a new altar cloth would procure very readily for me the good doctor's complete absolu-

tion, with permission to express similar opinions as often as I chose," replied her husband dryly. "But that is wandering from our subject; and even at the risk of incurring the anathemas of that worthy divine, I shall maintain my views."

"You do manage to spin out a good many words, but I fail to see what they amount to," said Mrs. Ormsby, greatly out of patience. "Would you have us sit in prim, starched attitudes all the week, and devote our time exclusively to singing psalm tunes and discussing original sin?"

"By no means. That would be only another form of hypocrisy and pretense. True religion is carried into every act of daily life. It purifies and exalts society, and makes it what it ought to be—a medium for the interchange of noble and elevating thoughts and sentiments; an instrument for performing works of genuine benevolence, reforming mankind, advancing the welfare of individuals and nations. Society as the form and exponent of religion would become a power in our land, whose healthful and purifying influences would reach to every fireside and every home."

"Well?" said Mrs. Ormsby as her husband paused, evidently hoping for some sympathetic response. But the response, so far from sympathetic, did not have the effect she hoped for, of ending the discussion.

"Fashionable society, as now constituted," continued Mr. Ormsby, "is not the friend, but the enemy of true religion and social order. Its sensual attractions and allurements furnish a glittering bait to draw men and women away from their allegiance to ties, relationships, and duties that have been ordained and appointed by God himself. Society properly ordered and arranged, should be a garden school for the young, where true and pure principles, nurtured and strength-

ened, might cause them to grow in all grace and loveliness, and attain to a vigorous, healthy stature, both physical and moral, fitted to assume the responsibilities of coming years. To those of maturer years it should be a bond of true, fraternal unity and friendship, provoking each member to a more earnest and faithful performance of every duty that the religion of a true and genuine charity may inculcate. But instead of exercising any influences of this sort, society, as it is now seen, appears to have degenerated into a sort of matrimonial exchange, where the unmarried one is offered to the highest bidder; while those whose domestic relations are supposed to be established, are generously and indulgently released from every duty and obligation excepting only those which a very liberal construction of the civil law imposes."

"Your remarks are exceedingly uncharitable and unjust," said Mrs. Ormsby. "Society is not what you represent it to be. It has claims upon its members, it is true, and those claims must not be disregarded."

"How do the claims of society upon a married woman compare with those of her husband?" said Mr. Ormsby. "Are they equally strong?"

"They are very different, but I do not see why they need to come in conflict. I suppose you would like to have a married woman shut herself up like a nun in a convent, and more especially if she should chance to be beautiful; or if she did venture to take a walk out occasionally, not dare to raise her eyes to the face of any man, unless she should be——"

"So unfortunate as to meet her husband—that is what you were about to say?" said Mr. Ormsby, as his wife stopped for the first time, exhibiting a slight sign of embarrassment.

"You gain nothing, Clara, by attempting to turn

aside the force of what I have said, by giving an extreme and absurd construction to my words. I have certainly never given you reason to suppose that I desired to limit or restrain your social freedom by any arbitrary or unjust rules. What I deprecate is the disposition and tendency of society to take the entire charge of a married woman, and of her daughters also, except so far as it leaves the husband and father a few rights and privileges which it can spare him without inconvenience, such as paying for household expenses, and defraying milliners' and dressmakers' bills. These small matters—and not so very inconsiderable sometimes—lie quite outside of anything society would be expected to trouble itself about. It has other prerogatives and claims, however, which it does not seem disposed to permit even a husband to interfere with—such as determining when and where a married lady should go, how long she shall be away, how much money she shall spend, and who shall be her chosen and favored escort and have the privilege of bestowing upon her many little attentions which would much more appropriately be received from him to whom she had plighted her love and faith."

At this remark a blush suffused the cheeks of the devotee of fashion, and she would have made a more decided effort to give the conversation another turn had she not feared that her husband would discover that he had awakened a consciousness of some scenes and incidents a knowledge of which she preferred not to share with him.

"It seems then, after all," she said, "that you consider a married woman debarred from all association with her gentlemen friends, and from receiving from them the ordinary courtesies that social etiquette sanctions and demands."

"A married woman, Clara, is debarred from transferring to another any part of her husband's prerogatives, and from allowing a degree of intimacy with any stranger that will link her name with his, and subject her perfect integrity and constancy to even a shadow of adverse criticism. A true wife will not yield to any one else a hair's breadth of the sacred ground whereon her husband's footsteps alone should tread; will not allow another to lay his hand, however lightly, upon that secret spring that unlocks scenes sacred to her husband's eye alone. Into that inner garden where her secret loves and confidences are nurtured and cherished she should permit no one to come save him to whom that right was yielded and given at the marriage altar."

"Your sentiments are very pretty—quite poetical," responded Mrs. Ormsby lightly, with one of those merry laughs which are so easily given by any one accustomed to fashionable society, even when there is no laughter in the heart. "I do not pretend to have attained to that ideal perfection that furnishes a pet theme for writers of poetry and fiction, while they themselves are, perhaps, as far removed from it as some of the rest of us poor mortals. I believe that a young, handsome woman has a right to enjoy life and even make something of a sensation. And the fact of her being admired and sought, even, by her gentlemen friends, ought not necessarily to make her husband jealous or suspicious. Life is short and full of anxiety and trouble at best; and I, for one, mean to pass through it as merrily as possible."

"So that life's best happiness be your primary end and aim, and man's greatest Teacher your guide, that your feet fall not into snares that lead away from the duties of wife and mother—twin jewels in a woman's life coronet; so that the sacred, inner chamber of your

heart echo no footfall save his whose life for twenty years has been linked with yours, and who holds you and this one ewe lamb as his dearest earthly treasures; within these limits, dear wife, be as merry as you will," said Mr. Ormsby, as he rose from the table, and letting his hand rest for a moment on Bessie's head, bent over his wife's chair and kissed her. "Only remember that in your breast beats your husband's heart; and that he values the society of his beautiful wife too deeply to be willing to be deprived of it quite so often."

With these kindly words, not designed to break the force of any of the plain truths that had been spoken but to leave those truths more firmly placed because inclosed in love's warm embrace, Mr. Ormsby again kissed his wife and daughter, and bidding them good-morning, left the room.

For a few moments neither the mother or daughter broke the silence that followed his departure. Bessie loved her father dearly, and shared his convictions and sentiments in a considerable measure, although not fully realizing and appreciating the dangers against which his warnings were directed. But her heart was heavy with the premonition of coming trouble, and her tears fell fast upon her clasped hands.

Meanwhile Mrs. Ormsby sat in an irresolute, uncertain state, opposing forces stirring within her mind. She was not altogether indifferent to her husband's earnest exhortations, and yet they had not taken hold of her mind with sufficient strength to arrest and break the force of other adverse influences under which she had fallen.

"Come, Bessie," she said at length. "Don't waste any tears over this scene. Your father has some curious notions and has contracted a very extravagant way of expressing himself. You just follow my directions

and you will do very well. You can have the morning at your own disposal, but this afternoon I want you to go out with me. The colonel has engaged to call at two o'clock with his phaeton and take us out riding, and we will probably call on Mrs. Glenn.'

CHAPTER XX.

WHO WAS HE? WHAT WAS HE?

“ But midst the crowd, the hum, the shock of men,
To hear, to see, to feel, and to possess,
And roam along, the world’s tir’d denizen,
With none to bless us, none whom we may bless.”

—*Byron.*

It was a dreary evening. All day leaden clouds had hung their sullen banners overhead, and the rain had been falling with slow, mournful dripping, while the wind seemed wailing a funeral dirge.

But the gloom without was not deeper, nor the wailing wind more mournful, nor the rain more pitiless in its cold, persistent fall, than the pall of heavy anguish that had fallen upon the heart of the haggard, grief-bowed man, who for many weary hours had been pacing the long, luxurious apartment, and finally, utterly exhausted, had thrown himself into a chair, and was sitting with his arms resting upon a table, and his face bowed upon them.

Half an hour passed. No sound broke the stillness save the rain against the window or the sigh that so often heaved the breast of the man sitting dejectedly in his chair. Finally Nicodemus Grimshaw raised his head, and as the glow from the cheerful grate fire touched his face his nearest friend would scarce have known him. All of life, animation, energy, or any settled purpose, seemed to have deserted him. He

spoke and moved with the dreary, automatic monotony of one void of any intelligent thought or action.

He touched the bell knob, and a servant entered.

"Some toast and a cup of tea. Let the tea be strong."

"Yes, sir." And in a few moments the servant returned with the order, and again withdrew. Mr. Grimshaw slowly swallowed his tea, and ate the two thin slices of toast, and had relapsed into his moody reflections, when, with a preliminary tap, the servant entered.

"If you please, sir," she began nervously, "the queerest-looking man is at the door, and says he must see you. He won't tell his name, and won't go until he speaks with you."

"Let him come in," said Mr. Grimshaw mechanically, feeling powerless to contend with anything in his present condition.

The servant soon returned with the visitor, and a strange visitor he was. He appeared to be a man of about forty years, although trouble and hardship had traced deep furrows on his brow, and scattered silver threads among his hair. His clothes, miserably thin, hung almost in tatters about his attenuated limbs. His eyes wandered with a restless, anxious gaze about the room, and his thin, bloodless hands worked nervously together.

As Nicodemus Grimshaw looked at him, a short cry escaped his lips. Then alternate shadows of perplexity, doubt, and misgiving crossed his face, resolving at last into an expression of mingled bewilderment and fear.

"My servant tells me you wish to see me," he said uneasily. "What can I do for you?"

"Yes, yes—I do want to see you," the stranger re-

plied, bringing out each word with painful hesitancy. "You are Grimshaw—yes, I know that—I can remember that, always—" he paused abruptly, and again his restless eyes went roving about the apartment, coming back to Nicodemus Grimshaw's face with an eager, anxious gaze.

"What can I do for you?" the merchant repeated.

"You promised to take care of them," said the stranger, drawing nearer, and laying his hand wearily upon the back of a chair. "You said you would keep them safe—safe. Where are they? I have looked, but I can't find them."

"What do you mean?" demanded Grimshaw uneasily. "Who are you, and now do you know my name?"

The strange visitor's somber eyes lit up with a fierce, angry light.

"One was little and tender, and one said, 'Don't go.' Oh, you know them well. What have you done with them?"

"I don't know what you mean," repeated Grimshaw angrily. "Who are you? what is your name? and what brings you to me, a perfect stranger, on such a night? Speak, I tell you. *Who are you?*"

Once the stranger's eyes met his with a fearless, almost defiant gaze.

"I had a name once, Grimshaw, yes, yes, but I've lost it now. But you said you would take care of them—I never forget that—and when I was far away you broke your word, or else they would be here now. And now you say you don't know me. But I will have them. You shall not keep them from me."

With one stride Nicodemus Grimshaw reached the side of the poor wretch and seized him roughly by the arm,

"What do you mean by your crazy talk?" he cried, his nerves shaking with an inward horror of half-recognition and torturing doubt. "If you don't know your name, you can at least tell me from whence you have come."

The angry fire died out of the stranger's eyes, and a weary, mournful expression softened them.

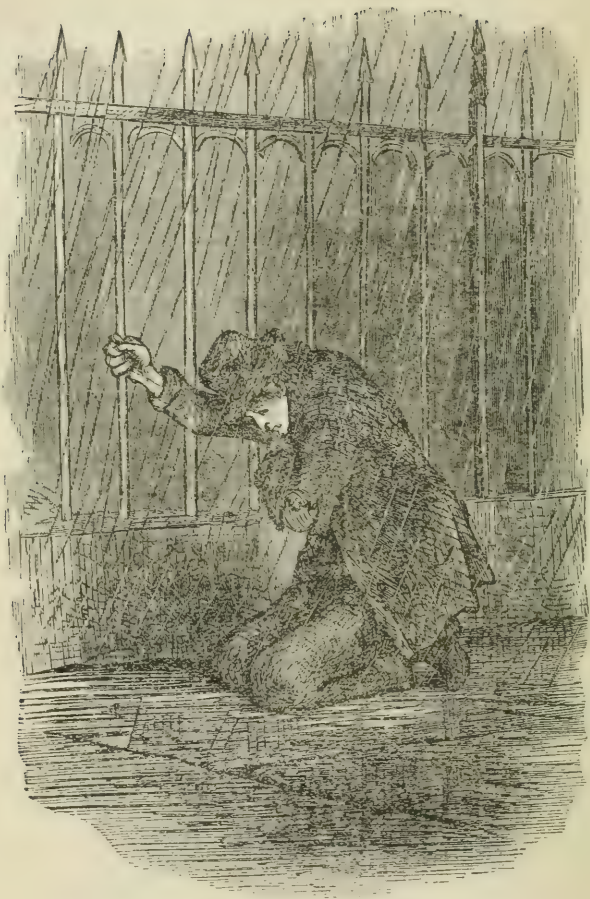
"Many, many, weary miles," he answered, raising one hand to wipe away his tears. "Through storm and heat, night and day, rain and cold. Always toiling on, and saying, 'one day less, one more pain and heart-beat passed, and joy and gladness to come.' Tell me," he repeated, his face flushing with eagerness, "tell me where have you hid my treasures? Give me my jewels—all that are left to me. Restore them, or I will make *your* life pay for theirs."

The fearful light leaped again to his eyes, and again Nicodemus Grimshaw felt that terror of dim, uncertain, half-recognition, clutch at his heart like a hand of ice. For a moment all power of speech or motion seemed denied him. Then pointing, with a shaking hand, toward the door, he exclaimed in a voice whose husky tremor he could not repress:

"I have listened to you long enough. I do not know who you are or what you want. Will you go peaceably, or must my servant force you out?"

The stranger faced him with a steady, unflinching gaze.

"I will go, Grimshaw," he said, with strange calmness. "I thought you were good once, but now I see what you are. You know very well who I am and what I want. You won't let me have them, because you hate them and you hate me—but I'm going to find them. And when I do find them"—lowering his voice significantly—"I'll come here again, Grimshaw. I have got something else to tell you. I will go now."



"HE KNELT THERE AWHILE."

The servant, who had been an unnoticed and astonished spectator of the scene, now opened the door, and followed the strange guest from the room, while Nicodemus Grimshaw once more fell to pacing up and down, his brain in a giddy whirl.

"Where have I seen him?" he ejaculated. "Good heavens, who is he, and what is this that he demands of me? At one moment his face and voice seem familiar, and then the fleeting recognition leaves me, and plunges me again into darkness and torturing apprehension. Heavens! are my troubles to be still further multiplied? Would to God I were in my grave!"

Not once in all this torturing scene, nor even when left alone, so that no ear but his own could have heard his words, did Nicodemus Grimshaw pronounce the name of him whom that strange, weird specter, and yet a veritable living man, brought so vividly to his remembrance. When that man permits an unwelcome thought to take form in words even though those words are heard by no one but himself, he feels that he has given that thought a formal recognition—has made it his own, and cannot so easily banish it forever from his remembrance.

But the door of the Grimshaw mansion had closed on the poor tattered stranger, and he was out once more in the cold and darkness. With slow, faltering steps he moved along, but ere he had gone far, he fell on his knees, clutching for support at the iron fence that inclosed the broad courtyard.

"I knew how to pray once," he murmured in a tone whose mournful pathos would have moved any listener to tears. "Will prayer bring them to me now? Oh, let me clasp my treasures once more, and then I can die in peace."

He knelt there awhile, tears falling from his eyes

like rain, and his lips moving, though no sound came from them. Then struggling to his feet, he pressed painfully on, gazing wistfully up at each house he passed. In most of the dwellings, the closely-drawn window curtains obscured the light, but now and then he would come to one from whence an unobstructed gleam shone warmly across the glistening sidewalk. Then regardless of the rain soaking into his garments, the poor creature would pause, and resting his arms upon the railings, gaze long and earnestly in upon that cheering light.

"I wonder if they are in there?" he would murmur brokenly. "If I went up and rang the bell, would they come and take me by the hand, and say, 'Don't go?' " Then, shaking his head mournfully, he would turn away, saying: "No, no! my treasures are not there! I have still further to go."

Darker grew the night, colder and keener drove the relentless blast, and more heavily fell the drenching rain. Still the stranger wandered on, until he came to a short street leading to the river. On he went, until at last he stood upon the very edge of the bulkhead, leaning his arms upon a corner-post of wood.

"Suppose they should be down there," he murmured. "Above, the waves swell and moan, but below all is peaceful. The mermaids sing sweet songs to lull away pain, and bright seashells murmur pleasant things to the ear." Then suddenly he bent down over the water, and cried in shrill, supplicating accents: "Tell me, my treasures, are ye beneath these mururing waters? Call to me never so softly, and I will hear and come to you."

While thus bending over the watery grave into which he seemed half disposed to precipitate himself, a sharp, quick step came ringing down the street, and a portly figure, encased in a rubber overcoat, hove in

sight. A thick cap was drawn tightly over his shaggy brows; his hands were covered with stout buckskin gloves; from a leathern belt around his waist hung a stout hemlock club, and a silvered shield shone upon his breast.

Onward and still nearer the functionary came, each foot in its turn coming down with that self-asserting pomposity so peculiar to the more weighty members of the profession, who appear to suppose that the extent of their downward pressure on the hay scales is the exact measure of their dignity and importance.

"Hello! what are you doing here?" demanded the policeman, seeing the crouching figure of the poor wanderer. Receiving no answer, he grasped the poor fellow's arm.

The stranger turned upon the officer a vacant stare, then made a feeble effort to release himself from the heavy grip; but finding it impossible to do so, he faltered:

"Have you come to help me find them? Do you know where they are?"

'Find what? What are you gibbering about?' demanded the guardian of the public peace. "Who are you—what are you, and where do you live? Tell me, quick, and let me take you to your home, if you have one." The captive looked at the policeman in hopeless despair.

"*Who* am I? *What* am I?" he murmured dreamily. "I don't know—it's all gone from me. If I could find *them*, they would know. Don't you know them?" he continued appealingly. "One said 'Don't go—don't go.' Can't you tell by that?"

"I should say not," retorted the policeman. "But I can tell this much—you're either drunk or crazy. At any rate, I can't let you stay in the streets all night.

As you don't know who you are, you will have to come with me to the station house, and perhaps by to-morrow you'll have your wits sharpened up a bit. Come along."

"Where must I go?" moaned the poor wanderer. "Where there are stripes and pain? Oh, have mercy—have mercy!"

"You'll not be hurt," said the policeman, his pity getting the better of his disgust, at the evident distress and anguish of the poor wretch. "You'll get a place to lie in, and a roof to keep the rain from you, and that's what a good many would be thankful for, this night. Come now, don't stand staring at the water any longer. You're pretty well soaked now, and you wouldn't find it any more comfortable down there."

Turning his back upon the river, the policeman conveyed his prisoner to the station house, where half an hour later he was tossing upon a heap of straw in a narrow, dingy cell.

CHAPTER XXI.

"THE DESOLATE."

"On charitable lists—those trumps which told
The public ear, who had in secret done
The poor a benefit, and half the alms
They told of, took themselves to keep them sounding,
He blazed his name."
—*Pollock.*

"COULD we not pay a visit to the institution for whose benefit our entertainment is designed? To be brought in personal contact with the objects of our charitable scheme would impart an added interest and impulse to our efforts, I think."

The suggestion came from Mrs. Glenn. The rehearsal was over, and the ladies and gentlemen were amusing themselves in various ways, when, glancing at a few ladies who sat near her, Mrs. Glenn ventured the remark. Mrs. Ormsby, had just turned to respond to a gay remark from Colonel Allen; but a frown of disapproval ruffled her smooth brow and her full lip curled contemptuously.

"Oh, dear no! Isn't it enough that we give money, time and talents? For my part, I prefer to keep as far from the dirty little brats as possible. You think me little better I suppose than a heathen!" she continued, laughing at the shocked, pained expression that swept over the sensitive face of Mrs. Glenn. "I suppose you would be willing to take the whole of them right into your arms. I don't blame you. Every one to his

taste! As for myself, I have no particular fondness for dirty-faced, tangled-haired children."

"It is their desolate, orphaned condition that I was referring to," replied Mrs. Glenn. "It must be so hard never to feel a mother's kiss, or loving touch, or hear her voice in accents of affection."

"I think you put rather too much color into the picture," said Mrs. Ormsby, stifling a yawn. "With a roof to cover them, and plenty to eat and wear, they have enough to make them as happy as they need to be. At least, that is my view of the case."

"The mere incidents of food, clothing and shelter constitute a small part of the sum of human happiness," remarked Bessie. "The bodily wants may be supplied even to luxuriousness, while the heart starves and pines in utter desolation and barrenness."

The low, clear voice, full of pathos, struck a chord in the mother's heart that in former years had often throbbed in responsive sympathy with sentiments like these. But the requirements of fashionable society make no provision for emotions of that sort, and in a moment Mrs. Ormsby, with that slight elevation of her eyebrows which with her was a sign of vexation, turned to her daughter.

"Really, Bessie, that was quite a speech. You appear to have taken a very deep interest in the heart wants of pauper children. Are you contemplating a lecture upon that subject? Or, perhaps, you and Mrs. Glenn propose to organize a sentimental society."

"If I should deliver a lecture," continued Bessie, in nowise abashed by her mother's raillery, "my subject would be the Claims of Humanity against the Tyranny of Fashion. A plea for the restoration of genuine charity, love, benevolence."

There was an expression upon the face of both mother

and daughter that foretold that a crisis of some sort was impending; but just at that juncture the redoubtable colonel came forward, extending his hands on either side of him with a mock show of separating them.

"A truce to this solemn debate," he cried gayly. "I appoint myself umpire, and declare both sides victorious. But with regard to Mrs. Glenn's suggestion of a visit to the 'Refuge,' with all due deference to Mrs. Ormsby—" with a gallant bow, "I am decidedly in favor of such an excursion. The afternoon is delightful, it will be quite a novel trip, and we will have ample time to return and complete our business arrangements. We will be better prepared to act intelligently after we have seen the institution. What do you say to that view of the matter, my Lady Ormsby?"

"My opposition is withdrawn, and I'm prepared to cast an affirmative vote," said Mrs. Ormsby, as she turned laughingly to her admirer. "It is our duty to defer to the lords of creation, I believe, in all matters where any diversity of opinion arises. If they give preference to us, in all matters of taste we can well afford to concede to them the balance of power, when the judgment is appealed to. Shall we go, ladies and gentlemen, to pay a visit to the 'Refuge' this morning?"

At this instant, Mrs. Newcome, who had been absent a few moments, returned to her guests, just in time to hear the suggestion submitted.

"Why certainly, friends," she replied with animation. "A visit to the 'Refuge' is entirely in order, and there is no better time than to-day. This morning I received notice of my election as a member of the board of managers, and it is quite proper for me to visit the place, neither do I suppose there would be any objection to taking a party with me."

This remark decided the case, and the formal vote which Mrs. Ormsby was waiting to ask for, was needed only to enable that lady to show how heartily she now indorsed the proposition which she had at first treated with contempt.

"All who are in favor of visiting the 'Refuge' will say 'ay'—and her own voice led the unanimous response.

"Lord Gordon is here," whispered Bessie in the ear of her friend. "His phaeton will hold three. Will you take a seat with me?"

"Certainly," Mrs. Glenn answered readily. Hearing her name pronounced at the same moment, she turned to see one of the amateur actors in the comedy standing by her side.

"Will Mrs. Glenn favor me with her agreeable company during our proposed excursion?" he asked in a soft, insinuating tone, intended to be altogether irresistible, but which only aroused in her breast a feeling of instant aversion.

"Thank you, no, Mr. Graves," she answered with quiet reserve. "I have arranged to ride with Miss Ormsby."

"And waste so much sweetness on the desert air?" persisted Graves, regarding her with a look of pronounced admiration that brought an added color to her cheek. "Why should my lord be so exceptionally honored? He will no doubt graciously consent to release you, having with him the favored one to whom his special attention will be given. May I have your permission to ask from him this concession in favor of one who, although not boasting so high a lineage, can claim a devotion equally profound and sincere?"

Mrs. Glenn raised her eyes with an air of quiet dignity, and bent upon him a steady, searching gaze which

lasted until his bold look fell before the mute, but stern reproof.

"It is a lady's conceded privilege to select her own company, Mr. Graves," she said, in a voice perfectly calm and unruffled. "I prefer to accompany Miss Ormsby. And allow me, sir, to say further," and now the color came to her cheek, and a flash shot from her eye, "that the terms of personal admiration in which you have presumed to address me, would be received with favor from only one gentleman—my husband."

The gentle dignity of her manner, and the innate integrity and purity that pervaded her sphere, made the bold, presuming man of the world stand abashed. His insolent look changed to one of involuntary respect and deference; and murmuring in an undertone: "I crave Mrs. Glenn's pardon—" he turned away. A moment later his offer was repeated to Mrs. Morse, and very graciously accepted.

An hour's ride brought the party to a large building occupying a tract of ground comprising several acres. The name and object of the institution was designated by a very large and imposing circular sign, which could be seen half a mile away. But the front steps were in a bad condition, and the surrounding grounds wore an aspect of neglect and general desolation.

"'Refuge for the Desolate,' rather a desolate-looking refuge, I should say," whispered Lord Gordon, as he assisted Bessie to alight. But the witticism brought no smile to her pale face.

The party approached the building and rang for admittance. A pale-faced young woman appeared at the opened door.

"We called to pay a visit to the 'Refuge,'" said Mrs. Newcome, stepping forward. "Is the matron at home?"

"Yes, ma'am," the portress answered wearily. "The board of managers is in session, at present, but they are about to close their meeting. Step into this room, if you please," indicating a door on the left.

The visitors filed into the apartment, and seating themselves, surveyed their surroundings. The windows commanded a pleasant view of the river. The room was plainly but neatly furnished, with a durable carpet, a marble-topped table on which lay some printed reports, and a goodly number of cane-bottomed chairs, good enough, and yet not better than they should be, while a few prints, and one or two certificates hung from the walls.

"I should think the children ought to be contented here," remarked Mrs. Ormsby, after a hasty survey.

"I hope they are," said Mrs. Glenn softly. "But this is not the only room, you know—and appearances are often deceitful."

"Dear me! how tiresome those proverbs do become after awhile," and Mrs. Ormsby put up one lavender-kidded hand to conceal a yawn. "I dare say it's as good as children of that class deserve, at any rate—and I do hope Mrs. Glenn won't weaken the force of that remark by another proverb."

"See here, Mrs. Ormsby," interposed Mrs. Newcome, who had been turning the pages of one of the reports. "Just listen to these items. As I am about to enter upon my duties as a member of the board, I suppose I ought to be interested in these matters. Here's over thirty-five hundred dollars spent in one year for provisions and groceries, exclusive of very extensive donations of such articles; nearly nine hundred dollars for milk, and thirteen hundred dollars for servants' wages. Really, to be a pauper cannot be so dire an affliction at that rate. Indulgences like these allowed

to children who make no return for them, and who sometimes are not even grateful, are what exhaust the large sums of money given to these benevolent institutions. A little retrenchment will, I think, be in order when I have something to say in regard to these matters."

"Those are my views, exactly," said Mrs. Ormsby, with more than usual emphasis. "I think"—but what she thought was destined not to obtain expression just then, for at the moment the door opened to admit the board of managers, headed by the president, Mrs. Le Grange, a stout, pompous lady of fifty or upward.

The visitors rose, and Mrs. Newcome, being recognized by Mrs. Le Grange as the newly elected member of the Board, was greeted cordially, and introduced to the other ladies.

The other members of Mrs. Newcome's party were then introduced, Lord Gordon, Mrs. Ormsby, and Colonel Allen being first named, the other names being placed in position on an irregular sliding scale, without very strict regard to precedence.

"I thought it would be proper for me to visit the 'Refuge' before taking my seat with the board next month," said Mrs. Newcome. "And I invited these friends to accompany me."

"We are most happy to see you all," said Mrs. Le Grange. "We were about to visit the schoolroom. Will you go too?"

"With pleasure," responded Mrs. Newcome.

"Certainly," echoed Mrs. Morse and Mrs. Ormsby.

The others indicated their acquiescence by a slight inclination, and the next moment they were passing along the wide hall leading to the room set apart as a schoolroom. The apartment was large and wide, well ventilated and lighted, furnished with desks, maps, a

piano, and a teacher's table, and affording accommodation for over a hundred children, not more than half of that number, however, occupying it at that time.

"Our friends would like to hear the children sing, Miss Noyes," said Mrs. Le Grange, addressing the pale young woman who had admitted the visitors. The teacher took her seat at the piano, announced a page, and led the children in a song.

"How nicely they keep time," whispered Mrs. Glenn to Bessie, who stood beside her. I am glad they have that privilege. But how sad and pale some of them look."

"Yes; that one, especially," Bessie whispered back, indicating a sweet-faced child of about eight years, seated at one of the front desks, over whose large blue eyes there seemed to hang a perpetual pall of tears. "My heart aches for that little creature. She is not happy here."

There was a momentary stir among the visitors as the song ended. Then the teacher rose and touched her bell.

"Children, Mrs. Le Grange will say a few words to you. Sit quietly, now, and give her good attention."

Instantly each little hand was clasped within its fellow and each face earnestly upturned, as the lady slowly rose and advanced to the platform, which was raised about eighteen inches, and provided with three seats, the center one a large armchair, and with a long table in front. An invitation to Lord Gordon to occupy the central chair was promptly accepted, his lordship being flanked on the right by Mrs. Ormsby, and on the left by Mrs. Newcome.

Everything being ready the speaker commenced.

"Children," she said, speaking slowly and solemnly: then stopped at that moment, and turned to the teacher

—“Miss Noyes, that little girl on the back seat is picking her finger nails. I cannot speak until all are orderly and attentive.”

The little delinquent clasped her hands together instantly, and at the same moment a small, officious boy, who had been employed sometimes as a monitor, whispered loud enough to be heard by every one:

“Miss Noyes, that little girl”—pointing to the small culprit—“is scratching her nose.”

The offending hand, after one more slight scratch, dropped to its place in the other, and a searching glance by Mrs. Le Grange satisfied her that her speech could now be delivered with safety, and she once more commenced:

“Children, do you know we are all sinners?”

“Yes, ma’am,” was chorused with cheerful alacrity.

“Yes, children,” repeated the lady. “We are all sinners—you and I, children.” Then she paused, and folding her hands over her black silk robe, glanced first at her own handsome attire and then at the little group before her, as though to impress upon them an adequate idea of the wide distinction between fashionably clad, wealthy transgressors like herself and the other ladies and gentlemen present, and such hapless, commonplace little sinners as they were. Surrounded by an atmosphere of luxury and opulence, the fact of being a sinner invested one with a sort of pensive romance which rather served to heighten the interest than otherwise; but in the case of the forlorn outcast, the child of poverty and want, unsupported by friends or social standing, the fact stood out in appalling and uncompromising distinctness, implying a state of degradation quite beyond reprieve or palliation.

Rag-pickers, beggars, itinerant peddlers and lighting-rod agents may undoubtedly be sent to hell when

they are done with this world, without the least danger of doing violence to the average sentiment of respectable society; but the question takes a very different form when it is asked what shall be done with people who live in houses that have marble facings, and occupy front pews in fashionable churches?

Mrs. Le Grange continued her remarks, asking the children a number of questions, to which they returned affirmative or negative answers with a parrot-like promptness and confidence which indicated that the exercise was no new one to them. The lady concluded her remarks with an injunction that they all be good children, and then came down from the platform with the air of one enjoying the comfortable consciousness of having performed an important duty in exactly the right way; and the other guests of honor followed her.

"They answered up well, didn't they?" said Mrs. Le Grange to Mrs. Newcome.

"Very well, indeed. They must have been instructed very thoroughly," was the approving reply.

"Could we not look through the building?" Mrs. Glenn asked one of the managers, at a whispered suggestion from Bessie Ormsby.

"Certainly. Miss Banks, will you show these ladies over the institution?"

Miss Banks, a sharp-faced woman of forty, one of the assistant matrons, bowed in assent.

"With pleasure. Where will you go first?"

"Downstairs I think," answered Bessie.

"This way, please." The ladies followed her to the end of the hall, where an inclosed flight of stairs led to the lower floor.

"This is the children's eating room," said Miss Banks, throwing open the door of a long, narrow apartment, with a wide fireplace at one end, where a woman

was standing engaged in cooking. Two long pine tables, with a pile of tin cups and platters at one end, occupied the middle of the room.

"How many children have you in the institution at present?" Mrs. Glenn asked.

"About seventy."

"I learn from the report that you buy all your milk?"

"We do," was the brief reply.

"I should think it would be much cheaper to keep several cows, which would furnish the requisite supply," said Mrs. Glenn.

"We did keep cows," said Miss Banks, while a slight frown wrinkled her forehead. "But we had to employ a man to tend them, and they strayed away one night, and—well we find it more satisfactory to have the milk supplied by contract."

"And you allow the children milk twice a day, I suppose?" said Bessie.

Miss Banks gave a short laugh. "Oh, dear no! We consider once enough; they have water at other meals. This way is the laundry."

"I am farmer enough to know that three cows would supply ample milk for these children, and could be kept at about one-third of their estimated cost for milk," Mrs. Glenn whispered to Bessie, as they went on.

"This is the laundry," said Miss Banks, stopping at a small room, where two women stood ironing. "This is all there is to see downstairs, except the cellar and storeroom. Shall we go up now?"

"Yes, I think so," answered Mrs. Glenn.

Two flights of stairs brought them to the dormitory, filled with rows of small iron bedsteads, neatly covered with counterpanes of patchwork.

"Oh, how tidy," Mrs. Glenn exclaimed admiringly. "Who has the care of this department?"

"The older girls take turns in making these beds, as also those in the boys' dormitory upstairs, and scrub the rooms once a week. Those are our rules."

"They must be very useful," remarked Bessie.

"Oh, not very. We find it easier to hire our help, and let the children play out of school hours," replied the matron. "Here is the sewing room, and further on, the hospital. We have a few patients in there, but the doctor's orders are to admit none but the nurses."

The visitors glanced in at the sewing room, where two women were busy; and then were about turning away, when a door on the opposite side of the hall opened softly, and a child about three years of age ventured timidly out.

"What a cunning little thing," Mrs. Glenn exclaimed, smiling. "What is that room for Miss Banks?"

"Only the nursery. The younger children stay there," replied Miss Banks in a tone of evident dissuasion.

"Can we see them? I should like to," urged Mrs. Glenn.

"Oh, certainly," and they were ushered into the room which contained about twenty children, varying in age from two and a half to six years.

"Come here, dear," said Mrs. Glenn, addressing a sweet-faced little boy of four, who had pressed timidly forward. On his cheek and forehead were several black and blue marks; and his large eyes wore a look of heart-hunger that made her own fill with sympathetic tears.

"We don't know what to make of that child," broke in the matron's sharp metallic voice. "His flesh is so tender that the pressure of a finger will leave a black and blue mark. Those on his face he got just in playing with the other children."

The child raised his eyes to Mrs. Glenn's face for a single instant, with a look of quiet and premature shrewdness that said as plainly as words could have done: "That's a lie, ma'am." Then catching a stern, meaning glance from those cold, gray eyes, he slipped away among his companions. Sick at heart, at this involuntary glimpse behind the scenes, Mrs. Glenn turned away, pausing at the door to say in a voice full of tender sympathy:

"Good-by, dears!"

The ears of the "desolate" were evidently unused to such attention as this, for they only regarded her in a sort of wondering silence.

"Can't you say good-by to the lady?" admonished Miss Banks sharply. "Nellie," she added, addressing a large girl who seemed to have charge of them, "you mustn't let the children run out into the hall any more."

"Good-by," the children said faintly; and with a stern cold glance, Miss Banks closed the door.

"What large grounds you have," said Mrs. Glenn, viewing them from a window in the hall. "You raise all your vegetables I suppose, of course."

"Oh, no—only a few. We keep one man; but we find it more convenient to contract for our supplies," said the matron, who appeared to have one stereotyped reply for all questions of that nature; and she led the way downstairs to rejoin the other visitors in the parlor.

"We will lunch before leaving," said Mrs. Le Grange. "And our friends will join us? It will be quite plain, of course."

Mrs. Newcome promptly accepted the invitation on behalf of her friends, and they were conducted to the dining room, where stood a long table, covered with

snowy damask, and spread with biscuit, white and brown bread, cold beef, ham and tongue, several kinds of cake and preserves, and tea and coffee. Mrs. Le Grange presided, seated behind a handsome silver service.

There seems a sharp, cruel irony in the saying that the rich must enjoy their wealth in order that the poor may enjoy their poverty. This is one of those aphorisms about the truth of which one does not like to reason. And yet a rasp does cut across the heart that has a live, human soul in it, when the fact becomes evident that a considerable part of the money bestowed in public charity for the benefit of the poor and helpless is not unfrequently expended by the professed almoners in providing luxuries for themselves.

When sick and wounded soldiers in the war wrote home to their friends, asking that a few jars of canned fruit and preserves might be sent direct to them and their suffering comrades on the ground that the good things of that sort that came in the form of general public charities were eaten up by the members of the Christian Commission, and their companions the nurses from Vermont, most people supposed that the story was made up, as a convenient way of getting more preserves; and yet a more thorough knowledge of the devious ways of human nature might have led those friends to believe that a little more than half—perhaps two-thirds—of the complaints of that sort were true.

"There is wrong management there," Mrs. Glenn whispered to Bessie, as they rode away. "The item for help alone would provide eleven servants at ten dollars a month, which is a fair price for such service. I counted only seven, all told. Where does the surplus go to?"

"To help swell that from the printed estimate for

milk, fuel, etc., I suppose," responded Bessie with a faint smile. "And to provide such 'plain lunches' as were served to-day. It seems to me that in an institution that is continually soliciting charity, ostensibly to be devoted entirely to the necessities of the children, rich cake, preserves and silverware are rather superfluous."

"So I think," said her friend. "And as to buying milk, or hiring a man to tend cows, there is many a poor boy would be glad to do it for his keeping—indeed I saw boys there amply large and strong enough for such work. One or at most, two active men, with assistance from the boys could raise from that large tract of ground all the vegetables needed; and they could keep poultry, too, which they do not do. By the way, what did you think of the catechetical performance?"

"An empty farce got up for show. The heartlessness of the whole proceeding was fully exposed by what we saw up in the nursery. It is enough to make the heart ache to see how charity, so-called, is made to serve as a cloak for dishonesty and downright fraud, while the tender sensibilities of little children are subjected to the mercies of such a woman as that Miss Banks."

Mrs. Glenn's sympathies were too deeply moved to continue the conversation any longer on that subject, and the remainder of the ride was for the most part a silent one. His lordship was in the meantime busying himself in making a private inventory of some of his recollections, and also discounting some of the possibilities and contingencies of the future.

"Well, some of you 'did' the institution pretty thoroughly," Mrs. Ormsby cried gayly as they gathered once more in Mrs. Newcome's parlors. "Did you make any very startling discoveries?"

"We did discover a serious discrepancy between pre-tence and practice, for one thing," replied Mrs. Glenn. "For instance, we found——"

But Mrs. Ormsby's jeweled hand was raised with a deprecating gesture.

"I beg you won't, Mrs. Glenn! I am quite sure my sensitive nerves could never stand the revelation. I have seen and heard quite enough as it is. My remark was only in jest; so let us turn our attention to the remaining preliminaries for our forthcoming entertainment."

Mrs. Glenn quietly drew back, and there was a moment's awkward silence, which was ended by Mrs. Ormsby.

"Mrs. Newcome, where do we hold our entertainment? You kindly intimated some time ago that these parlors could be used, as they have been, for our rehearsals."

"And they certainly would be," said the lady, "were it not that I have already secured, through a friend, a much better place—Orpheus Hall—capable of seating five hundred. It is only used for very *recherché* entertainments, and will be really almost as private as my own parlors. My husband opposed it, at first, but I made him understand that his opinion was not of the slightest importance, and that he was only required to hand me his check book when asked for. He subsided at last, but very ungraciously, I am sorry to say."

"When will the tickets be issued?" asked Mrs. Ormsby.

"Next Monday. I sent them to the printer this morning."

"Very well. Put me down for fifty."

"Thank you. And you, Mrs. Glenn?"

"I must consult my husband first," was the quiet reply,

"Ah, well," with a little contemptuous sniff at such conjugal servility, "and you, ladies?"

The ladies subscribed for various amounts, followed somewhat more cautiously by the gentlemen.

"All is settled now," said Mrs. Ormsby. "Now please remember, ladies and gentlemen, we hold our final dress rehearsal on next Thursday. Send me the tickets as soon as they are issued if you please, Mrs. Newcome."

The company dispersed. An hour later Mrs. Glenn was once more alone in her own room, with additional food for reflection but not of an inspiring nature.

CHAPTER XXII.

A WILLFUL GIRL.

"Let come what will, I mean to bear it out,
And either live with glorious victory,
Or die with fame, renown'd for chivalry:
He is not worthy of the honeycomb,
That shuns the hive because the bees have stings."

—*Shakespeare.*

A FEW days after Rolina Vernon's unsuccessful venture at the "Good Samaritan" she determined to make another trial toward a life of comparative independence.

Her friends were abroad, as usual, hoping to find the road to fortune and fame, but quite willing, in the meantime, to follow some narrow side track, temporarily, if along its edges perchance could be gathered the little they needed for immediate exigencies.

There is always some satisfaction and relief in dreaming of large fortunes at a distance, while the thoughts are silently busy devising some way to obtain a two-shilling lunch.

Donning her best attire—the distinction between which and her everyday garments, was fast becoming small by degrees and alarmingly less—Rolina set out to invoke once more the smiles of fortune. Purchasing a newspaper, she strolled along up Broadway to Union Square Park, and seating herself on a vacant bench, scanned the advertising columns, marking two or three

“Wants” that seemed, as she thought, to point to places that would be likely to suit her, and where she would in turn be able to fill the requirements enumerated. Then folding the paper, she leaned back for a brief rest, and to enjoy the constantly changing panorama before her, and at length actually lost herself in a day dream, in which she saw herself possessed of unlimited wealth, and pictured her own delight and joy in taking her turn as benefactor to those who had so long, and with such generous self-denial, stood between her and utter destitution.

To be suddenly awakened from a pleasant dream to the stern realities of life is not generally agreeable under any circumstances. To the wearied soldier, resting on his arms for a few moments, and lost in pleasant reveries of home joys and comforts, with peace and security around him, the clarion notes of the bugle calling on to carnage and slaughter are terrible.

“Mr. Glazebrook, a man of your profession has no right to be gazing after and smirking at every female who passes. I’ll not allow it, either! I am your lawful wife, I would have you remember, and the only one you have any right to admire.”

Rolina had too often shrunk away in the cold and darkness of her garret bedroom, in the effort to shut out the rasping torture of that shrill voice, not to recognize it, no matter where she might hear it. She turned with a start to locate it more correctly; and the worthy Mrs. Glazebrook, having turned her head at the same moment, to gaze after an exquisitely gotten up young man, took in Rolina at the same look. Their eyes met.

For a moment surprise and horror paralyzed both. Then with her eyes glowing with the exultant eagerness of a tiger about to pounce upon its prey, Mrs. Glazebrook sprang to her feet.

“I have found you at last, you minx! Just wait till I get you home again.”

But waiting was not in the order of Rolina's intentions. The voice and motion broke the spell; one wild, despairing thrill shot through her heart and along her nerves, and in the next instant her nimble feet were doing the best they could for her, with the newly made wife in hot pursuit, aided by a rapidly increasing volunteer corps of the *sans-culottes* fraternity.

Mr. Glazebrook did not at first take into his capacious understanding a full comprehension of the case. He stood motionless, bewildered, for a few moments; then as he watched the fast-receding form of his better half, he sighed.

The poets say there is language in a sigh—and they ought to know, for they dwell in a world from which fancy's fleeting forms come down to tell us all sorts of things that we never would learn in any other way.

There was certainly a deep meaning in the sigh that came up from the heart and lungs of that reverend gentleman as his wife disappeared around the corner. It was more of a groan, perhaps, than a sigh—such an interjection as one gives utterance to when suddenly relieved of a great burden, but at the same time oppressed with a misgiving that the relief is but temporary.

With two thoughts pressing upon her brain—to escape her pursuer, and at the same time not indicate the direction of her present asylum—Rolina sped on. For two or three blocks the chances seemed even, then youthful agility prevailed, and the pursuer paused, breathless. Ascertaining, by a quick backward glance, that she had distanced her would be captor, Rolina turned down a side street, hurried along for a block, turned another corner, and then paused before a store,

as though to inspect the goods displayed in the window, and pressing her hands, at the same time, against her wildly beating heart.

Meanwhile the crowd had stopped with the pursuer, and were plying her with all sorts of questions, when a blue-coated individual, rushing to the scene, began to jostle and push indiscriminately, using his baton somewhat freely on the smaller boys, simply to emphasize the order: "Move on! move on!"

"What's the matter?" he demanded, addressing Mrs. Glazebrook, and was promptly and emphatically advised that it was none of his business.

"Come, old woman, don't make a row here," said the officer. "Move on!"

"*Old woman* indeed!"

The remembrance that she was just then entering the last quarter of the honeymoon of her first marriage, imparted an unctuous intensity to that "indeed!" and as it went out from her teeth and lips, her thoughts instantly ran over and through her somewhat limited vocabulary of "cuss words." She wanted one or more words that would more adequately express her feelings on that occasion. She had been a public and somewhat ostentatious professor of piety ever since she could remember, and among the few condemnatory expletives she had been accustomed to use—the most of them for the especial benefit of poor Rolina—there was nothing that seemed fitted to do proper justice to the present emergency. As for swearing outright, it would scarcely be proper, especially as she was now a minister's wife. What Mrs. Glazebrook really wanted and was trying to call up, was some religious word that could be pronounced in a way that would give it all the force of an anathema, without at the same time compromising her professional reputation. What she would

finally have discovered and employed in that line, however, must forever remain unknown, for at that instant the imposing form of Mr. Glazebrook came into view.

A sober second thought had led the reverend gentleman to realize that perhaps it would be best to step around the corner and see what had become of his beloved wife. He now undertook to explain matters to the policeman, but in attempting to do so, unfortunately awakened in the mind of his amiable partner a suspicion that he was apologizing for her conduct, and she promptly informed him that she wanted none of his interference; at the same time putting her foot down with a force that might have been mistaken for a stroke of the policeman's club upon the pavement.

Matters had now reached a crisis, and the prompt exercise of the husband's executive authority was imperative. "You have promised to obey me, madam, and you shall do so!" said Mr. Glazebrook, as he took his wife firmly by the arm and marched her away. Nor did he release his grasp until they were seated in the railway cars that were to convey them back to the scene of his labors; the steam that moved them along being more potent, but less tempestuous than the wrath that boiled and foamed in the bosom of the unfortunate victim of marital tyranny.

Rolina, when satisfied that she had fairly escaped her pursuer, calmed her agitated feelings, and once more resumed her search among the columns of the paper for prospective opportunities for something to do.

Something to do—that was the keynote of her heart's cry. Something to lift a part of the burden from the shoulders of those who were bearing it so bravely, so uncomplainingly. Many a night, when her friends had supposed her peacefully asleep, oblivious of all care, this naughty girl had been crouching down be-

hind her door, listening to the schemes they were devising to obtain the little money they needed, and noticing more especially their frequent allusions to articles of clothing that she was in need of, to make her comfortable and give her a respectable appearance.

By means of these eavesdroppings, she had learned how it was that McCready's gold watch—the only valuable he possessed—disappeared so often, and for what purpose it generally went, and she was enabled also to solve the mystery of the process by which a pair of shoes, at one time, or a shawl or other needed garment, at another, found its way to her room. This also explained why it was that, when in her youthful exuberance she would exhibit her new acquisitions, there was beneath her pride and pleasure an undercurrent of pathos inexpressibly touching, and which led her more than once to press the hand of her benefactor to her lips, in grateful acknowledgment of the loving sacrifice that threw a perpetual rainbow of blessings across the horizon of her young life.

There is a want within us that craves sympathy and affection with an intensity that must be satisfied. It is not strange, therefore, that the heart of that child, orphaned so long from any of that tender compassion and love for which it had starved and pined while under the severe tutelage of her aunt, opened like a rose under the pure, unselfish devotion and chivalrous protecting care of these faithful friends, and experienced a blissful state of perfect peace and confidence in the single-hearted integrity, tenderness and deference that animated and pervaded all their dealings with her; and that to her they seemed like veritable angels of love and mercy, and the humble garret room like a heaven upon earth.

Her list having been reconsidered and arranged,

Rolina started for a place where a plain seamstress was wanted. A brisk walk brought her to a handsome brown stone house, upon the door of which glittered the number she sought. Her pull at the massive silver bell knob brought a colored manservant to the door, who, after eying her superciliously for a moment, condescendingly asked:

"What is your business?"

"I wish to see the lady of the house," Rolina answered with dignity.

The man took a second survey of the modest attire and retiring manner of the young girl, then elevating his eyebrows slightly, said:

"I don't know whether the lady will see you, but I will take up your card."

"I have no card. My name is Rolina Vernon, and I have called in answer to an advertisement."

"Oh! well, I guess you can wait for a few moments," and our heroine was left standing in the hall, while the servant disappeared up the staircase. In a few moments the man returned with the message:

"You can come up. This way."

He preceded her up the stairs, and tapping at a door in the upper hall, opened it in obedience to a summons from within the room, wide enough to admit the applicant, and then retreated downstairs.

Rolina now found herself in a lady's *boudoir*, elegant and luxurious in all its appointments. In a low, open grate a fire sparkled, dissipating the slight chill in the air; and in a deep armchair, drawn up before it, a lady half reclined, the novel which she had been interrupted in reading lying face downward on a small stand by her side.

"Come forward," said the lady. Rolina obeyed, and was subjected to a languid scrutiny.

"You have come to see about the seamstress' place?"

"Yes, ma'am. I can do plain sewing very well."

"How old are you?"

"Just past fifteen, ma'am."

"Too young I fear."

"I am old enough, madam, to stand greatly in need of employment," answered Rolina, with an unconscious pathos in her voice. "I am strong and not afraid to work. All I ask is a chance to earn an honest living."

"Yes? Where do you live?"

Rolina replied, naming the place.

"With your parents?"

"No, madam. My parents are both dead."

"Have you any references?"

Rolina's sunny face clouded for an instant. Then a look of brave resolution and conscious integrity shone in her blue eyes.

"Madam, I have never lived at service, as yet. I am poor, unknown, and have no references, but I am ready to discharge faithfully any duties I may engage to perform."

"No *references*? Never lived at service before? Are you a boarder at this place where you live?"

"No, ma'am. I am helping them a little, and they do what they can for me in return."

"Ah! Who are *they* who are so kind to you?"

A flush came to Rolina's cheeks, but she answered frankly and firmly.

"Three young gentlemen, madam, have rooms there, and I am living with them, doing their housework, and getting the meals; but it does not require but a comparatively small part of my time."

"Hm! Relatives of yours?"

"No, ma'am. They are not related to me, except by the bonds of that common humanity and charity which

prompts us to do all we can for each other. They are poor and so am I; but I have thought that I might be able to earn a little in some way toward paying our expenses."

"Your domestic relations are decidedly equivocal," said the lady frowning. "I do not wish to employ you. Your sphere is not agreeable to me. Please to retire."

This conversation had required rather more continued exertion than the lady was accustomed to put forth at one time; and stifling a yawn behind one heavily ringed hand, she turned partly away, resuming her novel and sinking back in her chair.

The living energies that the mind holds in reserve, kept back by the adverse fortunes of life sometimes break suddenly through these restraints.

"Madam," said our heroine; and the way in which that word was pronounced caused the lady to start, as if another and very different person had entered the room unobserved, and was addressing her. The same young girl was standing before her in the same modest garb; but the look as well as the voice had changed.

"I thought you had gone!" she said, but her voice was constrained, and the words were uttered in a manner not altogether free from a shade of embarrassment.

"Madam," repeated Rolina, as her firm look arrested and held the attention of her auditor in spite of herself, "is poverty a sin? Must a poor orphan girl perish in the streets rather than accept protection and care, even though they come in a way that may excite unfavorable suspicions in the minds of those who suppose that external restraints are the only means by which evil is prevented? The rich can cover their actions, whether right or wrong, from the gaze of the public, if they deem it advisable to do so; while to the poor, however

pure and innocent they may be, the only defense is their own conscious integrity before Him who sees every secret of their hearts, and knows every act of their lives.”

“I do not wish to listen to any more of your remarks, young woman,” was the sole response, as the lady at the same time touched a call bell on her table. To the servant who instantly appeared, she said simply: “Show this person out.”

Then turning to the next chapter of her novel, she was soon following with deep interest the varying fortunes of an imaginary heroine.

For some minutes Rolina stood before the house from which she had been so peremptorily dismissed, in a state of utter bewilderment. Then as she roused herself with a start the paper, which she had quite forgotten, rustled encouragingly in her hand.

“There is hope yet,” she exclaimed. “Here are other opportunities as yet untried. They may not all be so cold and utterly unsympathetic.” And glancing at the next marked advertisement she read:

“‘Wanted: A nursery governess for three children of five, seven, and nine years. Services required only during the day.’”

“Hope springs eternal in the human breast.” The man or woman who holds firmly on to the old maxim, “*Nil desperandum*,” succeeds at last, somewhere, and in some way. A thousand plans may fail, a thousand hopes wither and die; but those failures show how to guard each renewed effort with a greater care, until at last an effort is made that victory crowns.

In the encouraging anticipation of prospective success, the previous disappointment was forgotten, and with brisk steps Rolina started for the locality indicated. The house was reached, her errand make

known to the servant—a pleasant faced, warm-hearted Irish girl, this time—whom she was soon following to her lady's room. The mistress of the house sat in a low rocker, busy with some light fancy work. Her two youngest children—a boy and girl—were seated on the floor playing with building blocks, while the oldest sat by her mother's side with an open reader on her lap.

"You called to see about the position of governess, I understand?" said the lady.

"Yes, ma'am," Rolina answered, trying to speak in a quiet, matter-of-fact tone, and yet her eager desire betrayed itself in voice and expression.

"I merely want some one to amuse the children, and teach them the rudiments of English, until they are old enough to be sent to boarding school. I want them kept quiet and contented during the day; the evening they spend with me or with their nurse."

"So I supposed, and that encouraged me to apply for the situation. I am so fond of children!" laying her hand caressingly on the little boy's head. "I love to be with them."

An instinctive perception of character is often clearer and more reliable in early childhood than in later years. The child instinctively knows his protector and friend, and goes to him without hesitation; while the man or woman, who should be wiser, is often attracted and misled by a disguised enemy, because of a responsive, though perhaps unconscious, sympathy with some evil love from which that enemy is acting.

The child looked up to our heroine with instinctive confidence, then leaving his play nestled fondly at her side.

"You have rather a good face," remarked the mother, regarding Rolina scrutinizingly; "how old are you?"

"A little more than fifteen, ma'am,"

"Have you ever lived at service?"

"No, ma'am."

"That is a recommendation." Rolina's heart beat fast and she involuntarily drew the child closer.

"Where do you live?" pursued the lady.

At this question, which had been the keynote of her previous failure, Rolina's heart sank; then lifting her eyes, in which shone a light that should have inspired confidence in her sincerity and worth, she gave the street and number.

The gracious expression faded from the lady's eye, and she regarded the applicant with a palpably growing distrust as she asked:

"With your parents?"

"No, ma'am—my parents are not living."

The little boy raised his eyes again to her face, and noting its dejected expression, put up one hand and gently stroked her cheek.

"Don't cry!" he whispered softly, in a tone of compassion, so loving, that it was difficult for Rolina to refrain from tears.

"With whom do you live, then?" asked the lady.

For a moment Rolina was tempted to withhold all knowledge of her friends, and simply represent herself as one of Mrs Musty's boarders. The damaging effect of that information on the mind of the lady to whom she had applied a short time before, urged her to regard this as a case of justifiable deception. But her conscience answered that deception is never justifiable, and she gave a simple and straightforward, yet pathetic recital of the story of her life; told of her earnest desire to obtain an independent livelihood, and so requite, in some measure, the noble hearted friend who had not only saved her from destitution, but had guarded her life with tender and conscientious vigilance, with the

pure and thoroughly unselfish devotion of a father, and of the other two who had aided him in this work of true charity.

The story was one well calculated to touch any heart, and call forth a response of sympathy and confidence; but it did not have that effect in this instance. As she finished, a look of determined suspicion shone in the lady's eye, and extending her hand, she drew her little boy away from Rolina's side.

Lawyers have a trite saying which they often repeat and seem to know the meaning of: "The forms of law are the evidences of law"—and moralists have adopted the same maxim, only substituting "morality" for "law." This may be true enough when the forms of morality are understood to denote and include all the circumstances under which an action is done; but if this be left out, or not carefully observed, conduct in itself innocent and right, and which is prompted by the best motives, may be, and often is, regarded as evidence of some very great evil.

"Under the circumstances it will be impossible for me to engage you," said the lady, in a tone that seemed to the disheartened girl like clods of earth falling upon the coffin of her dead and buried hopes. "I cannot allow my children to come in daily association with a young person whose social relations expose her to even a shadow of suspicion."

"Oh, madam," faltered Rolina, the color flushing her face and tears brimming her eyes. "You said I had a good face—let *that* plead for me. Let the confidence of this dear little boy, who has come so lovingly to my side, plead for me. Believe me, I am honest and sincere, in the sight of that God in whom I endeavor to trust, although my way seems so dark and lonely! Only half an hour ago, I was turned away by another

lady, because I told the plain truth regarding my circumstances. The very extremity and urgency of my necessity seems to debar me from all assistance. Let not yours be the hand that shall thrust me still further from all sympathy and aid. What can I do if every heart is closed against me? What *can* I do, but die?"

"I'm decidedly opposed to scenes," replied the lady, as the little boy's lip quivered with involuntary sympathy. "I did say something about your looks, I believe, but appearances are often deceitful, and I cannot consider them an efficient recommendation. And as for employing in my family any one infected with the sphere of the city's slums, that is absolutely out of the question."

"Madam, I do not come from the *slums*," Rolina replied, her resolute spirit rising and quenching her tears. "Although my home is humble, even to destitution, it is by no means in a disreputable locality. And," she added, the latent fire of her spirit being again aroused, "upon those who constitute themselves our judges, who in self-righteous scorn and condemnation turn and pass by on the other side, and spurn our earnest cry for sympathy and help, rests the real blame, the reproof, the responsibility of the many lives who go down to despair, disgrace and ruin—of the many, who, refused the opportunity to secure the barest means of subsistence in this world, goaded to desperation and frenzy, plunge from it into another. If, in the cold judgment of this world, there is an appearance of anything wrong in the manner in which I have been and am still living, I am not responsible for that appearance. I have done the best I could, under circumstances which were altogether beyond my control."

"Your remarks are exceedingly offensive," was the cold rejoinder. "I at least know my duty to my chil-

dren, and I prefer not to subject them to such influences. You may be an honest girl—I hope you are—but from your own statements I am justified in assuming that you are not a suitable companion for my children.”

At this juncture the little boy looked wistfully up.

“Isn’t she going to stay, mamma? I want to have her—she is so kind and good.”

“No, my dear,” replied his mother. “I do not consider her a suitable person. Good-morning, young woman.”

Convinced that any further appeal would be useless, Rolina turned to go, when the child sprang after her and caught her dress.

“I’m so sorry you can’t stay,” he said earnestly.

“Good-by,” and he held up his rosy lips for a kiss.

“Charlie!” exclaimed his mother reprovingly. Then addressing Rolina: “You will please not to kiss him, young woman.” Rising hastily from her chair, she stepped forward to draw the child away.

Rolina had bent down to kiss the child; but changing the intended caress to a pressure of the little hand, she hastily left the room. In the hall she met the servant who had admitted her, and who had been an attentive and interested eavesdropper.

“Faith an’ it’s a rale shame to turn yez away, miss, for it’s a good face ye’ve got, an’ the little boy was right,” she whispered consolingly, as she conducted Rolina downstairs. “I will lind ye a riference or two to copy off, an’ that’s what will help ye, mebbe. It’s sorry luck ye’ll have gettin’ a situation without one.”

“Oh, no—thank you, no!” Rolina answered, appreciating the kind motive. “That would be willful deception, and I’ll not resort to that if I starve.”

“Fa’th an’ it’s an example ye are to many that con-

siders thimselves your betters," said the girl in a tone of hearty approval. "An' it's meself that's sorry fur ye, and wishes ye the best luck in the world."

She held out one red, brawny hand, as she opened the street door with the other. Its honest, kindly clasp sent a warm thrill to the heart of the sorrowful girl, as she grasped it in her own. As she gained the street, she looked up once more. The sympathetic Irish face was still regarding her. A hasty bow, and a "God bless ye, miss! I wish ye good luck!" and the door closed; and once more the little bark that had turned its prow so trustingly toward a prospective haven, found itself adrift again among the waves and storms of adversity.

We will not detail the various other efforts of our heroine to obtain employment that day. The influence of her first failure seemed to overshadow every subsequent effort; and the sun was touching the horizon when she stood before the imposing entrance of the last place to which her search had brought her, and regarded it with a feeling of discouraged embarrassment.

"Girls wanted to fill a chorus. To good voices permanent situations and good salaries guaranteed." So read the advertisement.

Large posters flanked the entrance—a long, deep alley terminating in green baize doors with great brass handles. After a brief indecision, Rolina went down the alley, and reaching the doors, pushed them open—and lo! was she in heaven?

The notes of a chorus greeted her ear, sounding strangely sweet; and stepping forward, she let go of the door, which immediately closed with a loud bang! that resounded and reverberated through the building as though a hundred doors had just been banged by as many unseen hands.

Trembling with nervousness, our young heroine looked about her. What were those circular rows of seats, ranged tier above tier—that elevated platform, with its half-circle of lights, seeming like so many stars in a garden of roses—those gilded and ornamented pillars, and wonders of forest and woodland scenery? Why, child, this is only the great Vanity Operatic Theatre; and that short, smoothly shaven man, with glossy black curls, is the manager, and at the same time the great comic singer, Tim Tot, Esq. Don't tremble, child, as he comes forward, attracted by the noise, and asks with business-like abruptness:

“Well, miss, what can I do for you?”

“You advertised in to-day's *Herald* for girls to sing. Have you all you wish to employ?” All semblance of fright had vanished, and she was herself again—that willful, venturesome girl.

“Well, no, miss. Can you sing?”

“My friends say I sing very well. Would you like to hear me?”

The manager had turned partly away, and Rolina's heart was beginning to sink at the prospective downfall of her last hope. He hesitated, regarding her with a half-amused, half-dubious smile; but at last, while a rush of grateful tears concealed the intense pleading in her eyes, he motioned her to go forward upon the platform.

The chorus had ceased, and none of the singers were visible. Rolina had inherited from her mother a voice of rare power and sweetness, with which she had often beguiled her humble tasks. For a moment a nervous trembling got hold of her throat and seemed to choke her; then inspired by the very extremity of the situation she sang, as she had never sung before, eliciting a rapturous burst of applause from the company, who had thronged the side entrances.

"Excellent, miss." And Tot's glossy curls bristled with enthusiastic delight at this prize that had drifted into his net. "This way please."

He conducted her to his office, waved her to a chair, and seated himself at his desk, while Rolina gazed at him, at a loss to understand or comprehend any of these strange proceedings.

"Miss—ahem?" he began.

"Vernon, sir," responded our heroine, perceiving now what was needed, "Rolina Vernon."

"Ah, Miss Vernon. Well, I would like to engage you, not in the chorus, but as a solo singer—our *prima donna* in fact. What are your terms?"

All this was "Greek" to the inexperienced child; she could only look at him in blank bewilderment.

"What salary do you expect?" said the manager.

Now she understood him, and knew that she had *almost* obtained the much desired employment. Only the matter of salary stood in the way; and fearful lest she should ask too much, she stammered red and pale by turns:

"Five dollars a week."

"Twenty-five dollars, did you say?" responded Tot interrogatively, for her voice so low and trembling was scarcely audible. "Well, that will do," he added, after a pause. "I will call for you and bring you to rehearsal to-morrow. You must of course, have a stage name, and if you have none selected, I will suggest only a slight change. Your name on the bills with your permission, will be Mlle. Roletta."

What a light heart Rolina carried to her humble home at the close of that day. When her friends came in to the evening meal they found her in the gayest spirits. Bright visions visited her as she sank to sleep in her little room, for once utterly unmindful of their

plans and conversation, while they sat around the stove, discussing the probabilities of having two meals on the morrow.

Sunrise found her astir the next morning. One by one her "family" left, and naught remained but to await the arrival of Mr. Tot. Slowly the moments dragged by, until at last she began to fear that her success had all been a delusion, or a dream of the night; when a vigorous jerk at the bell downstairs sent her heart into her throat, as if by some mysterious process the wire had been connected with that organ. It was no dream then, but a joyous reality. The next moment she heard the steps of Mrs. Musty's maid-of-all-work shuffling along the hall; and then through the open door, a man's voice asked for "Miss Vernon."

Miss Vernon's hat and shawl were adjusted in a twinkling and her door locked. Then descending the stairs as composedly as possible, she entered the parlor and saluted the little man who stood before her, waiting to conduct her to the carriage standing outside.

The shuffling maid disappeared down the kitchen stairs, with eyes and mouth agape; and from that subterranean region there immediately went to every lodger then in the house, by some mode of conveyance never yet fully explained, the important information that something unusual was happening. As Rolina and her escort left the house, every window had a tenant, and every variety of conjecture was indulged in, as to the meaning of that unprecedented proceeding.

CHAPTER XXIII.

INTO A NEW HOME.

“There blend the ties that strengthen
Our hearts in hours of grief,
The silver links that lengthen
Joys visits when most brief.”

—*Bernard Barton.*

“WHAT will you give for some news?” said McCready, returning earlier than usual one morning, after an absence of about an hour and a half.

“Is it good and fresh?” asked Brown, looking up from his portfolio.

“It is good news for me, and I think it will interest you,” replied McCready, smiling.

“Don’t give it just yet,” interposed Scratch. “Anything worth obtaining is always valued according to the time and effort required to secure it. You may have obtained an engagement at five hundred dollars a week, or some old gentleman equally magnanimous and wealthy, may have accidentally discovered that you are his only surviving nephew, and in the exuberance of his good will he may have passed out and over, just to leave you in the undisturbed enjoyment of his millions. In that case of course, will take our share, and that is how we come to be interested. Or better still, some beautiful young lady, whom you never heard of before, may have mistaken you for her

country cousin, and by way of apology for the blunder, may have offered you her heart, hand and fortune."

"Don't let your vagrant fancy discount any more of the things that can never possibly happen," said McCready with a hearty laugh. "Let your guesses come down to the plane of sober realities."

"You are waxing serious over the matter," remarked the author. "And for my part, I think the time and effort already expended entitle us to receive the news without further suspense. So out with it, James, 'an' thou lovest us'."

"Well, the news I have for you is this," said McCready, "My mother has rented her place in the country, and opened a boarding house here in the city, on a moderate scale, of course, hoping in that way to raise the necessary means to clear off the remainder of the mortgage; and she wants us all to come and board with her."

"That may be good news for us," said Brown, "and bad news for your mother. If she expects to pay off her mortgage with the fortune she realizes from our patronage, her hopes and the mortgage may both go to protest."

"They will go to no place of that sort," protested McCready. "Good and bad luck come in bundles, and it is good luck's turn, now, to make up a small bundle for us. I have already picked up one stick, to-day, that will do to go in. You remember your friend Tom Florence, who went to the mines four years ago, and to whom a kind old friend of mine loaned fifty dollars, at my suggestion. He also gave him an outfit, and at the same time gave me the claim. I had given up all hopes of never seeing either Tom or the money; in fact supposed that he had long ago received his shake from old Cerberus on the other side of the Styx."

"And have you seen him?" asked Brown and Scratch in a breath.

"Saw him and lunched with him half an hour ago. He did not stay long at the mines, and seems to have led a rollicking, adventurous life, but is in luck, somehow, at last. From a large roll of greenbacks he handed me a hundred-dollar bill, in remembrance of that fifty and the et ceteras, which I very resignedly accepted, and it is here at our service."

"The anxiety I felt lest we should increase rather than diminish your mother's mortgage, is entirely dissipated," said Brown complacently. "And I must now tell you that I have also a small stick to throw into the bundle. The little sketch I wrote last week 'founded on myself' as an aspiring author once designated an original production—and entitled 'Never Give Up,' was accepted to-day, at fifteen dollars; and that sum less three dollars paid for the shoes I am wearing, and which came just in time to prevent the others from forsaking my feet entirely—goes into the pool."

Both then turned to Scratch with a curious look of mingled pity and sympathy, the language of which was:

"Well, old comrade, anything from you?"

Scratch allowed his thoughts to "lie low" for a moment, as if covered and kept back, while saying to himself: "Well, isn't this strange." At last he said.

"Yes, comrades, I also have a small stick for the bundle. That picture I have been at work on, representing the meeting of Hope and Despair, I left to-day in Wilson's commission store. Wilson is confident that he can easily dispose of it for a hundred dollars—eighty to me. At any rate, he afforded me substantial proof of his confidence, by very kindly advancing me twenty-five dollars."

There are times when words however wise and well-considered, seem out of place; they are not wanted, just then. The three friends sat for a few minutes without making any further remark. Each felt more like thinking than talking. At last McCready, recollecting an omission in their confab, turned gayly to Rolina, who had been enacting the part of a silent partner in the little *coterie*.

"What have you to say about it, little mouse? We have been doing all the talking, so far."

"I think it will be splendid," said the child, her face kindling with enthusiasm, behind which was a still greater joy as she thought of the "stick" she would have to add to that bundle of hope and encouragement. "I shall be so glad to know any one who is related to you, Mr. McCready—and especially your mother, who will, I am sure, be as good to me as you have been. That she will be kinder, I could not ask," she added, her eyes filling with tears.

"She will do a great deal more for you than we have any of us been able to do," said McCready, earnestly, "and the realization that you will be with one who will stand to you in the place of a mother is what gives this change its greatest interest and value to me. So, you see, brighter days are dawning for our little friend, as well as for the rest of us."

"They could not shine upon a more deserving beneficiary," said Brown with a sympathetic smile.

"That is true," responded the actor, heartily. "And moreover, I have a strong impression, which amounts almost to a conviction, that the occurrences now happening, are the beginnings to us, of that 'good time coming' for which we have been so long hoping. I feel more hopeful and courageous than ever before; and I am sure these hopes are awakened not simply by the

remembrance of the fortunate incidents that have happened to-day and that have thrown into our hands a little money that we needed, but by the secret influence of unseen but coming events, which already exist potentially, in the causes that will bring them."

Rolina's heart was beating high with joy. It was the day following her engagement with Tot, and the precious secret had not yet been divulged; nor did she intend it should be until the situation was secured beyond all peradventure, and she would be able to place her first stipend in the hands of her friend and benefactor, and in that way give him substantial proof of what she had accomplished.

"I am so glad," she said, raising her bright face, "that I am to have another friend, and one who will stand to me in the place of a mother. Do you think Mr. McCready, she will let me work for her, as I have done here for you? If she will, she need not hire a girl, and there will be so much saved."

"I dare say she will, chicken," McCready replied, as he affectionately stroked the short curls that clustered around the pretty head. "But one would think that 'work' was the only word you ever learned. One thing you may be sure of, however, mother is not going to let you work yourself to death, if you do want to help her. When she thinks you have done enough she will stop you."

"Oh, no danger," laughed Rolina. "I will help her save so much that she can pay the rest of that mortgage in a very short time."

"Why, what a listener you are," exclaimed her friend. "You will be plotting to make all our fortunes, I dare say."

"May it please the chair," interposed Brown, "I propose that in view of our speedy removal, we summon

our landlady, and settle any little outstanding claims in that quarter."

"Second the motion," responded McCready. "Will our well-beloved brother Scratch send down the call?"

The artist caught up a large bell, with which they were accustomed to summon the landlady, when her presence was required, and stepping out to the landing, rang an energetic peal. Soon a heavy step was heard, toiling up the stairs, attended by a sound somewhat resembling that of a steam-tug, drawing a heavily laden barge through the Narrows. The door was opened, and the *ci-devant* widow came in.

"My dear Mrs. Musty," began McCready, desiring to break the news as gently as possible. "We have called you up to inform you that events render it necessary for us to remove to other quarters. With due respect to you, madam, and at the same time with a lively appreciation of your manifold merits as a landlady, we most respectfully tender our valedictory."

Mrs. Musty stood gazing for a moment, first at one and then at another of her lodgers, in speechless amazement. Since the late agreeable events she had regarded our friends with more favor; and now the disclosure that she was about to be deprived of them all at one time "struck her all of a heap," as she afterward expressed it to her husband. Her look of bewildered inquiry, and Mr. McCready's grave and sober visage, formed an amusing picture, and the artist, catching up pencil and paper, began a hurried sketch of the situation.

"Why, Mr.—Mr. McCready!" stammered the landlady at last. "This is something very sudden, isn't it?"

"Rather, madam. But the day has come at last when we must bid adieu to your hospitable roof."

"May I ask have I given you any cause for this move?" pursued Mrs. Musty "Have you had anything to complain of—any——"

"Madam," interposed McCready, with a profoundly grave expression. "We do not desire that there should enter into the record of our departure, the slightest allusion to any event that may even look like a complaint. Our appreciation of your generous hospitality has been so often and so fully expressed, that you will, we are sure, graciously and condescendingly release us, on the present momentous and trying occasion from the necessity of reciting our sentiments on that score. As for the apartments we have occupied, we have found in them everything we expected to find, and I will add—with a vivid recollection of sundry nocturnal occurrences, which I am sure my friends Brown and Scratch will unite with me in recalling—that we have found here, especially in the earlier part of our sojourn, a good many things that came to our notice gratuitously. Our little friend Rolina, has, however, as you will doubtless allow me to say, done a good deal in the way of diminishing the intensity of the experiences impressed upon us by the interating anthropophaginians referred to. She has by this means increased rather than diminished the considerations that would lead us to regret the necessity of leaving these quarters. We would therefore say to you in parting in a clear and circumstantial way and without any unnecessary circumlocution, that while our removal is the result of a concatenation of events that have gathered around us, it comes at the same time fairly and fully within the range of unavoidable human contingencies."

It has been recorded, somewhere, that when Lord Nelson on a certain occasion returned to England, covered with the glory of naval exploits, he was awarded

the honor of a public reception, an important part of which consisted in listening to a Latin address pronounced at him by the Lord Mayor of London. The old admiral had forgotten his Latin, if he ever knew any, but assuming, very naturally that the speech was designed to be complimentary, he responded at its close:

“The same to you, sir.”

Mrs. Musty, with less reason perhaps, received a similar impression with regard to the unique valedictory to which she had been listening, and as McCready ended with a grand flourish and bow, she said:

“I am glad that you have been so well suited, Mr. McCready.”

“And now,” said Brown coming to the rescue, lest his fun loving friend should be tempted to further deluge the landlady with his high-flown oratory, “I am commissioned, Mrs. Musty, to impart to you the pleasing intelligence that we are prepared to settle our rent in full.”

That Mrs. Musty could understand. The amount was named, and the money placed in her outstretched palm, which immediately closed over it with a spontaneous contraction.

This little incident intensified the effect of the valedictory, and Mrs. Musty bade her lodgers good-by, with deeper emotion than they had ever before seen her manifest, except on the single occasion when quite overcome by supposing that she had been liberally remembered in the will of that dear friend Tom Harcourt.

Tears actually rolled over her fat cheeks, while giving an affectionate handshake to each of the men; and when she came to Rolina, she not only caught her in her arms and kissed her, but finished with an em-

brace that came near taking the breath out of the child. Then bidding them all once more a sorrowful adieu, Mrs. Musty slowly descended the stairs, to impart the mournful intelligence to her liege lord, who had just returned from a funeral, and was solacing himself in the kitchen with a pipe of his favorite fine-cut tobacco.

"And now, little woman," said McCready, turning gayly to Rolina, when the landlady's footsteps had died away, and the friends had relieved their pent-up merriment by a hearty laugh all around: "you must fly around as if the proverbial 'old Scratch' was after you, and gather up all our portable belongings. Mother has three boarders already, but she has four small rooms that will be ready for us at an hour's notice, so you see each will have a room to himself."

"And no occupants already there to enforce pre-emption claims?" queried Brown mischievously.

"Nothing of that sort, my dear fellow, replied McCready, "I will go now, and give mother notice that we are coming, and will be there this evening.

McCready left the room whistling gayly, while the others set to work, and in a short time had their personal effects arranged in the most convenient manner for transportation. Rolina was the busiest of all, flitting hither and thither in a very transport of delight; and when McCready returned, all were ready to leave.

The old quarters had some endearing attractions, especially for Rolina, for there she had for the first time, learned and realized the meaning of the word *home*. She was, however, more glad than sorry to leave; and the farewell glance that she gave to the rooms and all the surroundings, had in it more joy than sadness.

They gave one last look into each room and corner, to make sure that nothing had been overlooked or forgotten, and then went downstairs.

"Adieu," murmured Brown, as they turned away from the house, in the doorway of which stood Mr. and Mrs. Musty to see them fairly off. "Adieu to past joys and sorrows. Others are coming, but these will never return."

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"Well, mother," said McCready, entering the new home, at the head of his party, "here we are, bag and baggage. This is our little housekeeper, of whom you have heard me speak so often; and these are my companions in misery, Messrs. Scratch and Brown—artist and author."

"I am glad to see you all," said Mrs. McCready, who, with her neat attire and genial, animated face, seemed very different from the desponding little woman we saw some time ago. Taking Rolina's hand in a warm, motherly clasp, she kissed her affectionately, and then extending her hand in turn to the others, said: "I shall do all I can to make you feel comfortable and at home."

"We have no misgivings on that score," said Brown with a polite bow. "We already feel acquainted with you, through our friend, your son, and think ourselves highly favored in being your guests."

"James remembers his mother with good words and deeds," said Mrs. McCready, gazing with pride at her tall, handsome son, whose usually pensive face was just now aglow with pleasurable emotion. "Let me show you to your rooms. The half-hour before supper you may wish to spend in arranging your things."

She conducted them to their several apartments, and then turned to go downstairs again. Rolina, however, who had been the last to be shown to her room—which she found, to her joy, closely adjoining that of her hostess—had paused only long enough to put down her bundles and lay aside her hat and shawl.

"Please, Mrs. McCready, let me help you get the supper," she said, stepping after her.

"But, child, you have been hard at work in getting moved, and must be tired," remonstrated Mrs. McCready. "You had better rest to-night."

"Indeed, I am not at all tired, and would much rather be helping you," persisted Rolina. "I will come up and put my room in order by and by."

They went down to a small but cheerful little kitchen, at the neatness and convenient appointments of which Rolina was delighted.

"What a charming place!" she exclaimed. "I shall love to work here. It really seems as if I had come *home*, at last," she added with an involuntary burst of feeling, while her cheek flushed and her eyes glistened.

"And it shall be such to you, my dear," said her friend, earnestly. "You have done your part to promote the comfort and happiness of those among whom fortune has cast you, and now we will do ours to make you realize that this is your real home. James has talked of you so often that you are no stranger to me; and as he is my son, you, who have done so much for his welfare, shall be as my daughter."

Rolina's blue eyes filled with tears.

"May I call you 'mother?' I will try to be a good daughter to you, Mrs. McCready."

"Certainly you shall," replied her friend cordially. "I shall be very glad to have another child to love. So let us bind the bargain with a kiss."

A deeper flush dyed the cheek of the orphan girl as she received the right hearty kiss and embrace; then they set about their duties with alacrity.

"You seem to get along first-rate with mother, little housekeeper," said McCready, as Rolina took a seat at the table, close to her new-made relative. "It looks as if you were on good terms already."

"The best of terms," replied his mother. We have each adopted the other, and I have a daughter now, as well as a son."

"I congratulate you heartily," said McCready, "and can promise you that you will find our little quondam housekeeper a most grateful and affectionate daughter. I esteem it the happiest moment of my life to be at last able to place her in the care of one who will give her a mother's love, and with whom she cannot fail to be happy."

Much pleasant conversation followed, Rolina sitting by the side of her adopted mother, and listening like one in a happy dream. Supper over, her services were again tendered; and while McCready and his mother enjoyed the usual luxury of a "real good talk," Rolina flitted to and fro until everything was put tidily away. Then, seating herself on a bench at "mother's" feet, with one of her hands clasped tightly in her own, she was soon wandering in that pleasant, shadowy land which lies between sleeping and waking, and where the thoughts move along without the least labor or care.

When they at last separated for the night, and Rolina retired to rest, she felt that the lines had indeed fallen to her in pleasant places; and with tears of hope and happiness in her eyes, and a prayer of thankfulness on her lips, she fell gently asleep.

She awoke next morning with the dawn, bewildered at first by her new surroundings; then a vivid recollection of the scenes that had culminated in this delightful change, came to her assistance; and dressing with all speed, she left her room just as Mrs. McCready emerged from her apartment.

"Good-morning, my daughter," said her friend, kissing her. "Do you feel quite rested? or must I exercise my maternal authority and order you back to bed?"

"I am quite rested, mother, and ready for work," smiled our heroine. "You don't know how much I can do," she added, laughing and blushing.

"I have had some hints on that score!" replied Mrs. McCready playfully pinching her cheek. "I am prepared to expect great things from my son's little house-keeper."

They went down to the kitchen, where Rolina was soon moving blithely about, seeing at a glance just what ought to be done, and meanwhile singing little snatches of the songs whose melody had so often filled her garret home. Mrs. McCready looked on with pleasure and surprise at the untiring energy and ready alacrity of her adopted daughter, who seemed in her youth and small stature scarcely more than a child. When the meal was ready and the boarders were summoned to it, the sunshine of her face called forth an answering reflection from the countenance of every one.

As soon as breakfast was over the strange boarders dispersed. Then McCready's father took from a stand in one corner of the room, a large family Bible, and returning to his seat, said with simple earnestness:

"It seems proper that we should commence this day by invoking the divine blessing upon the relations upon which we have entered. Will our friends join us?"

A closer drawing together of their chairs was a sufficient answer. The One Hundred and Forty-fourth Psalm, followed by the Fourteenth of John, fell with a power of inexpressible comfort upon each listener's ear. Then Rolina at her friend's request sang one of her well-known hymns, and finally every knee was bent while the elder man besought the divine blessing, in a prayer at the close of which every voice was heard in a fervent and earnest "Amen."

“Good-by, mother,” said McCready.” “Good-by Mrs. McCready,” said each of his friends; and “Good-by, little housekeeper,” was chorused by all three; and then they were gone, while the mother and daughter set about their respective duties.

The days flew swiftly by. Constantly busy, her heart warmed by the love and affection that surrounded her on all sides and with bright prospects before her, that were daily drawing nearer maturity, Rolina felt that a very large share of the blessings and enjoyments her heart had coveted had already been granted to her.



COL. ALLEN.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE PRIVATE THEATRICALS.

IT was nearing the hour for the presentation of "She Stoops to Conquer," the entire proceeds of which—so read the elegantly embossed and tinted cards of admission—were to be donated to that noble charity, the Refuge for the Desolate, when Mr. Glenn, handing his ticket to the doorkeeper, entered the spacious building known as Orpheus Hall.

Taking a seat that suited him, he glanced around at the assembled and incoming audience. The hall was fast filling; and as his calm, critical eye noted each fresh arrival, his breath was suddenly held in restraint by a deep, silent thought.

Of fashion and display there was abundance to feast and enchant a merely senuous observer; but to the one accustomed to penetrate beneath the fair, exterior expression for the seal of Nature's true royalty, what a dearth—what an utter lack of anything like a *genuine* aristocracy, among the throng who bore the proud title of "the elite" of fashion able and refined society. The broadcloth suits, and diamond shirt-studs, the faultless kids and glossy beavers of the elder men, afforded a poor supplement to the sordid expression of face, the cold, mercenary light of the eye, and the look of grasping, absorbing cupidity that formed and filled their controlling sphere. Nor could the rustling silks and velvets, the plumes and jewels of their partners, soften

or redeem the air of disdainful and purse-proud exclusiveness that inclosed them, shutting out from every tie of kinship or sympathy those who, lacking that which alone can constitute a passport into the great temple of Mammon, were counted by them as "heathen men and publicans."

Among the younger class, were any number of pretty, empty, girlish faces; seeming like so many shallow pools, dotting the earth after the rain of a night, bright and sparkling while they last, but speedily dissipated by the searching rays of the morning sun. When their ephemeral beauty departs, every trace of what they were or might have been is gone with it, and scarcely a ripple of regretful emotion remains on the great sea of worldly sentiment. Shallow youths were also present, in all the glory of slender canes and incipient mustaches with the latest academy drawl and society gossip at their tongues' end, for the edification and amusement of their blooming *inamoratas*.

A few here and there, could be seen, substantial, sensible, cultured and refined. Worldly wealth, of which some of them possessed a large share, was not the treasure around which the strongest and most enduring affections were gathered. But sadly few were they, standing out from the multitude whose only god was Mammon, like solitary beacon lights along a shoal of deadly yet alluring reefs.

While Mr. Glenn sat closely observing and studying this sample edition of the city's aristocracy, a tinkling bell suddenly arrested the current of his thoughts. The next moment the curtain rolled up, and amid a burst of prolonged applause, the actors made their appearance.

"Mrs. Ormsby looks dashing to-night, doesn't she?" reached Mr. Glenn's ear from the seat just behind him,

as a most enthusiastic demonstration greeted that lady's appearance as *Kate Hardcastle*.

Something in the tone prompted Mr. Glenn to glance at the speaker, and his eye took in the persons of two of the regulation "young men about town," equipped with broadcloth suits, seal rings, slender canes, etc., complete, and with their mustaches waxed in the very extreme of the fashion. The young men, who had been inspecting the stage through their opera glasses did not notice this brief scrutiny; and the one addressed spoke in reply:

"Yes, so long as she has her *philtre d'amour* at her side she is sure to look dashing."

"Wonder how many curtain lectures she gets from *monsieur son mari*? or perhaps he possesses his soul in patience, remembering the proverb: 'What can't be cured must be endured.' A stranger on seeing the two gentlemen alone with her, would be rather puzzled to guess which was the one she had promised to love, honor, and all that, you know."

"I don't see where the puzzle comes in," was the answer. "The way her smiles and graces fall on one side, and don't fall on the other, would give the redoubtable colonel the benefit of the guess every time. And Ormsby is a nice fellow, too, handsome, respected, and appears to think the world of his wife. One would imagine he might come in for a few of her smiles and pretty looks."

"All stuff and nonsense!" retorted the other. "So long as she presides over his house and table, he ought to be satisfied. A man should not claim too much from a good-looking woman like Mrs. Ormsby; although, by Jove, she does act sweet on the colonel."

"Well, when I marry I shall stipulate with my wife to let *me* do the most of the courting, and not allow so

much outside adoration. But there's some romance about a former attachment between them, I believe."

"Yes. A sort of 'lost to sight to memory dear,' kind of affair. But the sight seems to be helping the memory now, and they get along together remarkably well."

"Is Ormsby here, to-night?" said the other, glancing around through the audience. "I don't see him."

"Perhaps he is biting his nails at home, or like a more sensible man, solacing himself with a cigar. But I rather imagine he is here, or will be, for his daughter is in the cast and she is the apple of his eye."

"And I guess he is *de trop* in that quarter, too. The 'milord' has made rapid strides in her favor lately."

"Not much! Mamma's favor is enlisted, not the girl's nor the father's. I have it on good authority that she can't endure him; and by the way, see how she is drooping, of late. Just watch her," he continued, as Bessie appeared, when not even her fidelity to the spirit of the play could prevent her shrinking from the palpably significant attentions of *Hastings*. That looks like a genuine love match, doesn't it?"

Mr. Glenn looked more carefully at the object of their last remarks. His wife had made her a frequent theme; and as her fair face, pale with repressed suffering, met his eyes, their keen, discriminating glance was dimmed for a moment. The excitement of the occasion brought at last a slight flush to Bessie's cheek, and kindled her eye with momentary animation; but the mask was not worn with sufficient skill to conceal the utter weariness that shaded the sweet young features as with a heavy pall; nor could the tones of her voice, adjusted for the moment, to the spirit of her rôle, disguise or conceal the deathlike sadness that filled her heart.

"I wonder which draws the larger proportion of this audience," remarked one of the young men after a short silence. "The spectacle of a public flirtation between the beautiful Mrs. Ormsby and the renowned colonel, or the rare spectacle of a live lord, stepping down from the pinnacle of his nobility, and consenting to perform upon a plebeian stage, for a charitable purpose, at ten dollars a ticket?"

"About an even draw, I should imagine; although the Ormsby flirtation may afford a little the stronger inducement. A live lord isn't any longer such a queer fish that sensible people lose their wits running to see him. If his lordship happens to be a gentleman, it is as much as any one expects. I would not take Lord Gordon, from his looks to be a lady killer. But Mrs. Ormsby has the stamp of genuine royalty. What a beautiful woman! One might travel a fortnight and not see her equal. And what a right glorious empressment she throws into her acting. I believe she was born for the stage. Strange her daughter manifests no more ability in that line."

"Her daughter hasn't been in the 'appearance' business quite so long," remarked the other dryly, "and has't yet attained the art of wearing her mask cleverly enough to hide the real truth. Egad! it goes to a fellow's heart to see a young and lovely girl just crushed out of existence. I tell you, Mason, I believe she is in a decline."

"You're not smitten?" queried Mason ironically. "Common-sense will tell you it's of no use—you'd only have your wings singed. I'll wager this solitaire, that all her smiles and favors are bought and paid for in advance, by private arrangement with 'mamma.'"

Mr. Glenn had been intently watching the dejected and heart-weary expression of the interesting girl, and

her earnest, but unavailing efforts to conceal her real feelings. His head had fallen upon his hand, and he was becoming oblivious to the gossiping criticisms of the young men behind him, when a name fell upon his ear, that rivetted his attention at once.

"That's a pretty little piece of dry-goods! Do you know who she is, Al?"

"Of course I do. Don't you?"

"No, indeed! I am not so favored. What is her name?"

"Mrs. Glenn."

Raising his head quickly, Mr. Glenn glanced toward the stage. The only scene in which he felt any interest was then being enacted; and as his wife stepped diffidently upon the stage, and her clear, sweet voice with the least little nervous tremor, broke the silence, a hundred opera-glasses had been levelled at her.

"It's her *début*, of course. She is evidently a novice in this sort of work, but she is making a sensation. See how the gaslight shimmers through her golden hair—and it's all her own too; I'd swear to that."

"Yes, and that beautiful flush on her cheeks, and the graceful airiness of her figure, are enough to turn the head of any susceptible fellow—always excepting, of course, you and me. Where has the little gem hidden herself?"

"There has been a careful concealment, for some reason. She may have a jealous husband, you know, who may be at this moment watching her, his green eyes at the same time sending an askance quiz at every good-looking fellow who has his glass on her. But so much as this I know—she is one of the stars that have lately arisen upon the Ormsby horizon; one of the favored few who float in the immediate wake of 'Riene Clara'—as the gallant colonel calls her."

"And isn't the queen in danger of finding a rival in her own subject? I must see what strategic powers will do for me, and in some way gain admittance to that charmed circle. I would like to enter the lists and break a lance for this 'layde faire.' There is something absolutely fascinating in that sweet, fresh face, and those innocent, childish blue eyes."

"You better save your lance for some more fortunate venture. You would find that an unpromising quarter for the display of any nineteenth century knight-errantry."

"How is that? Can a woman young and pretty, and knowing that she is so—for every woman who is pretty is the first to know it, and the last to forget it—be insensible to the admiration of her gentlemen friends and acquaintances?"

"No doubt the lady is quite willing to have gentlemen admire her, provided they are content to 'worship afar off.' She seems to think that her husband has the monopoly of her charms, and holds herself distinctly aloof from all promiscuous homage, a walking iceberg of propriety and reserve. They told me that Graves attempted some of his nonsense with her the other day and she brought him up standing."

"And served him right. Graves would go as far as a woman would let him. What sort of a man is her husband?"

"I haven't seen him, but understand that he is good-looking and all that kind of thing; some six feet, less or more, in height. He must be either a Bluebeard, and guard her with a surveillance that forbids her to look sideways or draw a full breath without his sovereign permission, or else she is an example of wifely devotion and fidelity such as one rarely sees in these degenerate times."

"Degenerate, indeed; but you have only increased my desire to make the acquaintance of this *rara avis*. I declare, Al, it makes me feel more a *man*, to catch a glance from those pure, earnest eyes. It seems as if a fresh, sweet breeze from a restored Eden had swept across one's senses."

"You are waxing poetical, Ned; that's a dangerous symptom. Morris was at Mrs. Newcome's the day that Graves received his quietus, and witnessed the little 'aside.' He says the flash of her eyes, so quiet and yet so severe, was like an electric shock. Graves wouldn't dare to indulge in another experience of that sort. I suppose if her husband had been there he would have felt like restoring to the *argumentum ad hominem*, but one flash from her eye, Morris says, would be more effective as a squelcher than a knock-down every day for a month. And he is not the only one, either, as I understand, that she has placed *hors de combat* with a stroke of her eye. Making love to her she apparently regards as the exclusive prerogative of her husband, and it doesn't pay for other men to attempt to supplant him."

"Happily the better, and I believe the larger portion of men have not yet ceased to revere and admire the stern integrity and purity of a woman whenever and wherever she is seen," said the one called Ned, in a tone of more serious earnestness than he had yet employed. "One would suppose from the behavior of many of the women who make a sensation in fashionable society that they would like to change and trim down the marriage service until it would require from them nothing more than a condescending permission graciously given, to their nominal husbands to become responsible for their unlimited expenditure, and afford them the protection of their names, while they indulge

in their flirtations with other men. I tell you, Al, I am thoroughly sick of the heartless insincerity I have observed in so many of these fashionable women. The wife who holds firmly and loyally to her marriage vows, because she was in earnest when she made them, and has never ceased to love the obligations they impose, deserves the honor she always receives from every true man. That honor I would heartily accord to the lady of whom we have been speaking; and should it ever be my good fortune to make her acquaintance, I shall take care that no act of mine shall offend in the slightest degree her sense of womanly and wifely integrity. When men and women learn, understand, and love the obligations that the marriage relation involves, and cease to pervert and degrade those obligations, as so many do now, this world will be a long way nearer to heaven."

After this remark the two young men remained silent until the close of the entertainment; one of them evidently not fully sympathizing with the serious turn the conversation had taken.

In casual conversations, men often seem to be quite in agreement, who, in their real sentiments, are very far from each other. A desire on the part of each to accomodate his remarks to the views of the other, so long as no actual compromise of principle is required, keeps them near together apparently. But if the agreement is only apparent, and not internal and real, they are almost certain to strike some point before they progress very far that sends them off in opposite directions.

With many conflicting emotions Mr. Glenn had been listening to this conversation, and at a convenient opportunity turned to notice more carefully the young man whose relative position behind him he could de-

termine by the sound of his voice, and who had given utterance to sentiments so entirely at variance with the apparent import of his first light and careless remarks. His countenance was still glowing with the animation imparted by the feelings which had stirred him, and which made him seem almost like another person.

Mr. Glenn would gladly have taken him by the hand, and assured him of the interest with which he had listened to his remarks. That, however, was not the right time or place to do so; but he took into his memory a mental photograph of the young man's face and figure with the hope of making this incident the means of forming his acquaintance at some future time.

The comedy was ended. A trio and several quartettes followed, in which Mrs. Glenn's birdlike voice rang out with silvery sweetness; then the curtain went down amid a prolonged demonstration of applause, and the performers adjourned to the dressing rooms to lay aside their stage costumes and prepare to go home.

"Your figure and acting were regal, Clara," said the colonel, as he threw Mrs. Ormsby's cloak over her shoulders. "To have stood by your side and shared in your triumphs to-night I esteem one of the proudest honors of my life."

He had taken her warm, yielding hand in his, and he raised it to his lips ere he released it; while Mrs. Ormsby, hearing a step at the outer door, turned to admit her husband, her brain fairly reeling with the thrill that swept through every fiber of her being. It was the first time Colonel Allen had ever called her "Clara," or spoken in such high praise; and the look he had bent upon her—the strong, magnetic pressure of his hand and lips threw over her, for the moment, a spell of wild, almost delirious excitement.

Her husband's look of mingled admiration and concern, as he noted the burning flush upon her cheeks, and the intense brilliancy of her eyes, was not noticed by her. In fact, her look at her husband was barely sufficient to assure her that he was there at her side. Her other wrappings she received from Bessie's hands, without noticing what she was doing. Like one lost in a delicious but bewildering dream, she responded to the colonel's parting looks and words, and then mechanically and almost unconsciously resigned herself to the care of her husband, who conducted her to the carriage.

To Bessie's infinite relief, Lord Gordon did not press his escort, but departed with Colonel Allen. As her father drew her to him, in the carriage, she nestled closely within his protecting arm, and leaned her head on his shoulder, her eyes filling with tears of mingled weariness and content.

"You look quite worn out, my love," Mr. Ormsby said, gazing at the sweet face, which shone so pale in the light of the carriage lamps. "The exciting efforts of this evening have been too much for you. You had better not tax our little girl with any more work of this sort, Clara. She is not equal to the effort, nor do I think it is in harmony with her tastes or temperament."

Aroused by the touch of her husband's hand upon her arm Mrs. Ormsby heard the last words sufficiently to catch an external glimpse of their meaning, and answered:

"Yes, it is quite out of her line. It is strange that she doesn't inherit any ability from me." Then she relapsed into her reverie, little rills of delight dancing through every nerve, as the closing events of that evening passed once more in review.

"She inherits the ability to gladden her father's heart and brighten his home," said Mr. Ormsby, tenderly drawing his daughter to a closer embrace. "That is all I ask or desire. You must have respite from these remorseless demands of fashion, my darling, and recruit your energies. I could not be reconciled to have my sweet flower fade so early."

Bessie drew her veil down over her face, and with her head against her father's breast, and her hand in his, allowed her tears free vent. The paroxysm was short, but it brought relief; and when the carriage drew up before their door and her father lifted her upon the sidewalk, the sweet face was composed and almost cheerful.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE WAY OF THE TRANSGRESSOR.

“ ’Tis fearful building upon any sin ;
One mischief enter’d, brings another in ;
The second pulls a third, the third draws more,
And they for all the rest set ope the door,
Till custom take away the judging sense,
That to offend we think it no offence.”

—*Smith.*

“FIRST appearance of the charming young *cantatrice*, Mlle. Roletta.”

So read the flaming posters affixed to bill boards, fences, unfinished buildings, and even the large bowlders occasionally to be found in vacant lots, testifying to the indefatigable enterprise of the advertiser. On the evening announced for the appearance of the young *débutante*, the house was filled to overflowing.

On the occasion of her first rehearsal, Rolina had been presented to the assembled company, with much pride, by the manager; and when at his request she stood up to sing, and Signor Pam Pum, with a grandiloquent flourish, desired the young lady to show him her music, she could only gaze at him in silent perplexity. The only music she knew anything about was in her throat.

“Vill ze signorina hand me ze music?” repeated the professor testily, while a laugh went around; but at this juncture the manager came to her relief.

“She sings without notes, at present, signor. Let her

give one or two pieces to start with, and then you can arrange a sufficient accompaniment. They're all very simple."

"Oh, oh, certainly!" said Signor Pam Pum, all affability. "Ze signorina vill please sing some of her zharming scngs. I am ze most profound attention," and he laid his violin across his knees and bent an absorbing gaze upon her, while Tot gave his young *protégée* a reassuring pat on the shoulder.

"It's all right. Sing anything you please—and don't mind those giggling girls, they're only jealous."

Thus adjured, Rolina sang several ballads, which were received with evident delight, especially one of a humorous character, which Brown had composed some time before, and adapted to a familiar tune. She was then dismissed, after an appointment for the following day, when "ze signor would have ze honaire to accompany her with his violin."

Surprise amounting almost to incredulity had followed our young heroine's disclosure of her engagement; but after a diligent investigation of the case, and ascertaining that the field of labor into which she proposed entering, had no low or absolutely objectionable features, and stipulating moreover, in her behalf, that she was to be limited to such ballads as her own taste approved, McCready gave his cordial assent, and wished her every success.

The auspicious "opening night" arrived, and the house was packed from floor to gallery. Brown, Scratch, McCready and his mother were there in full force to witness the *début* of their enterprising little friend. The trying hour had come, and Rolina, arrayed in her first long dress, was to face an expectant critical audience.

Slowly the first part of the programme was gone

through. Then amid a torrent of applause, the manager advanced, leading the new "star" by the hand. She acknowledged the reception by a graceful bow, and then as the signor raised his violin to his shoulder, the cheering gave place to a dead calm, so sudden so intense, that it seemed to Rolina as if the throbbings of her heart must be audible to every one there.

One glance over that sea of upturned faces—one encouraging flash from the eyes of McCready, who sat within easy range—and then the sweet, girlish voice arose, tremulous at first, but gaining strength and clearness with each note; and when the song was ended, and she turned to make her exit, the house shook with the deluge of applause that followed.

Three times was the young *cantatrice* recalled, and it seemed as if their importunity could not be satisfied; until at last Tot came forward, his hair bristling with managerial enthusiasm and self-congratulation, and begged the audience to let the performance proceed, thereby allowing the fair *débutante* an opportunity to rest her voice, before appearing again. To which appeal, the more humane portion of the audience—happily in the ascendancy—promptly responded; and amid a shower of bouquets, the young *cantatrice* was led flushed and panting from the stage.

"You're a genius, little woman!" McCready said, as clinging to his protecting arm, Rolina followed him to the carriage at the close of the entertainment. "Just keep to those simple, sweet little ballads, and you are on the highroad to fame and fortune. The enthusiasm they elicited proves that the tendency of a large majority of pleasure seekers is still toward that which stirs the best and tenderest emotions. You will yet win a name of which we shall all be proud."

And he drew the little hand more closely to his side,

and kept it there, after they had entered the carriage; while Rolina with a bounding heart, nestled down beside him, as she had done on that evening of her first visit to the great city, and with her eyes shining now as then with grateful and happy tears.

The succeeding nights were a repetition of the first, as at the end of the week Mr. Tot called Rolina into his private office.

"You have fully realized my expectations, thus far, Miss Roletta," he said; "and I desire to engage you for the season at a salary of fifty dollars per week—two appearances each evening, and two *matinées*, and a benefit, say in three months. What do you say to that?"

Fifty dollars a week! The child could scarcely believe her ears. In her inexperience and ignorance of the value of talent, the sum seemed princely; and she could not realize that such a value could attach to the rendering of simple ballads which she had sung so often at home, with no more thought of manifesting any extraordinary genius than the birds have in their carols. For a moment she sat in silent perplexity, which the manager at last interrupted:

"If that is not sufficient, Miss Roletta, I might——"

Then the young girl's tongue was loosened, and her tender conscience rebelled against accepting what seemed like an extravagant and altogether disproportionate compensation.

"Oh, indeed, sir—I hadn't thought——"

"We always pay a little extra for star performers, and besides, you will have your wardrobe to furnish, you know," pursued the business-like Tot, inwardly exulting at the excellent bargain he was securing. "If you are agreeable, I will arrange the contract at once." And with a few rapid scratches of his pen, a form was

filled out, signed and witnessed, and fifteen minutes later, Rolina turned giddily away, her hand clasping a much larger roll of money than she had ever been the owner of before.

No wonder her heart swelled, and her eyes grew misty with tears, as she poured her precious burden into the lap of Mrs. McCready, and begged her to accept it all as a feeble token of her gratitude and love; while her adopted mother took her in her arms, and fondly embraced and kissed her.

"No, indeed, my dear, generous girl," she exclaimed. "You shall not give all this to me. You may if you choose, pay me five dollars a week for your board—for I shall not allow you to work for me day and night, as you have been doing, and the rest you must keep for your own expenses. By the time the bills for dresses, carriage hire, and other outlays that you will be obliged to make, are paid, you will have very little remaining to lay by in case of need. Your services are worth that much, in addition to your expenses, as James will tell you; and you must use it carefully, and save all you can." And to this arrangement Rolina was obliged to accede.

One Saturday afternoon, near dusk, Rolina was sitting in Mr. Tot's office, awaiting the receipt of her weekly salary, her custom being to receive it immediately after the *matinée*, when a woman pushed her way in with a face so haggard and careworn that our heroine's sympathetic heart was instantly touched. Mr. Tot looked up from his account-book with a deprecating scowl, as the woman slowly made her way to the desk; but undeterred, she laid one trembling hand upon the low railing that ran along the back of it.

"Mr. Tot, the illness of my child has prevented my

attending the chorus for the last fortnight, and I am reduced to the verge of starvation. Can you not advance me a little to keep life in me and my babe until I am able to appear again? I shall not need help very long."

Something in the tone, disguised as it was by poverty, want, and utter helplessness, struck familiarly on Rolina's ear, and instinctively she drew nearer and looked into the woman's face. There also she was conscious of the same indistinct recognition, as of one whom she had seen before, somewhere, and under very different circumstances. While she was striving to recover the missing link in her memory, Tot spoke, counting out meanwhile a roll of bills.

"I'm very sorry, Mrs. Jones, but it's against our rules," he said in brief, business-like tones. "If you can come back before you're place is filled, I'll take you on again—but that is the utmost I can do for you. We can't go against our established rules in favor of exceptions; if we did it wouldn't be long before half the chorus would be off on vacation, and expecting to draw their salary all the same."

A look of blank despair settled upon the woman's face as she realized the hopelessness of her appeal. With the passiveness of utter despondency she folded her tattered shawl about her, and turned away, as Tot handed Rolina the counted roll, and pointed to a receipt ready for her signature.

Rolina had not been long enough a stranger to suffering not to feel a throb of that sympathy whose only honest and legitimate expression is good works; and having received her money, she bade the manager a hasty "good-day," and hurrying out overtook the stranger a few yards from the place.

With slow and painful steps the unfortunate and

destitute woman walked on, followed by our heroine, hesitating to accost her, and yet unwilling to leave her without offering sympathy and aid. Through the crowd of home-seekers they went, until at length, Arabella—for she it was, as the reader has doubtless discovered—paused, and looked around, as if undecided whether or not to turn down one of those dingy, dirty streets that adorn the lower part of the city. That momentary pause furnished the opportunity Rolina desired.

“Excuse me, madam, but I heard you say you were in want. Can I help you?” she said, touching her arm gently.

Startled, and with an angry flash in her eye, the poverty-stricken, despairing woman turned full upon our heroine, and for a moment looked as if she would like to annihilate her. With the mortified pride of her former position bitterly rankling in her heart, the proffered charity of a stranger seemed an unbearable insult.

But maternal solicitude and the pangs of hunger, which she was at that moment actually suffering, softened her resentment, and her flashing eyes became dim with tears, as she met the calm, clear, but sympathetic gaze of the young girl.

“Come, I will go home with you,” Rolina said in a tone of gentle authority. Down the dirty street, through the mud, slush and *débris*, now in front of a church, and then of a low grog shop, from which issued the harsh and repulsive sounds of bacchanalian revelry, strangely contrasting with the sweet-toned evening bells ringing for vespers, and seeming like angel visitants calling away from those resorts of dissipation and misery. Even the children on the street were soaking and steaming with filth, while their words

were the coarsest and lowest [that their feeble voices could utter.

Low down as our heroine had been placed in the social scale by the cold criticism of opulent arrogance, this was a phase of life utterly beyond her comprehension—a depth of degradation from which her pure soul revolted in horror, causing her to wonder if this were really a Christian community—and why so much effort and money were yearly expended for the conversion of the heathen, abroad, when right at our own doors one might witness scenes and sounds that those heathen would not attempt to equal, much less surpass.

Down the street, splashing through the slush, and tripping over little human beings that were scarcely to be distinguished from bundles of rags, save for the volley of profanity that followed any accidental disturbance—jostling desolate and depraved men and women, inhaling effluvia rank with the seeds of disease and death—on went the pair, into a dark and noisome alley, and at last reached the foot of a rickety pair of stairs.

As they paused there for a moment to survey the situation, Rolina, placing her hand on the arm of her guide, asked:

“Have we done any harm to the three little boys behind us, who are cursing us so terribly?”

“Oh, that is nothing,” replied Arabella with a half-reckless indifference. “The bench we stumbled against and upset just now is their gaming-table—that’s all; and the penny dip that was giving them light was extinguished. They are the most hopelessly depraved little wretches in this street.”

Up the stairs they went, guided by the music of the creaking, rickety structure, and finally arrived at the first landing. There, after resting a moment, they moved onward and upward, through dark entries

and along stairways, three flights more, the sound of their steps, and their occasional remark to each other being drowned by the Pandemonium noises of every description, from the piping wail of infants and the shrill screaming of children, to the drunken curses and altercations of men and women. The closed doors of most of the rooms mercifully shielded from the gaze of our heroine the scenes that were being enacted within.

At last the dingy garret was reached, and Rolina paused to press her hand over her wildly beating heart. Then with her haggard face growing still paler, Arabella laid her hand on the arm of her companion.

"Excuse me, miss, but please do not come any further. I am afraid *he* is at home."

How like a wail of despair arose that exclamation. *He* at home! He—to whom his wife and family should look as the provider, their dearest earthly friend and protector; at home—at the wretched place to which his sin had dragged them—the place literally cursed by his presence!

But Rolina had gone too far to recede until her generous purposes were accomplished; and almost involuntarily she pushed the door open and made the first entrance herself. The apartment contained no occupant, as yet, to excite fear or alarm in the breast of either the desolate wife, or of the gentle girl who stood in that abode of abject misery like an angel of mercy—whose soft blue eyes filled fast with sympathetic tears, as they took in the scene before her.

There was simply wretchedness in the extreme. Every article of any value had long since found its way to the dingy den of their last resort—the neighboring pawnbroker. A low straw pallet was spread in one corner, upon which Arabella's husband had slept off many a drunken stupor; while in an old wine-

basket, upon a pile of rags, lay the emaciated form of an infant, apparently on the threshold of death.

For a moment Rolina stood gazing into the room, her heart and brain throbbing. But her experience in the merciless school of adversity had made her quick to act; and silently pressing Arabella's cold hand, she turned, and banishing every thought of personal peril, quickly descended to the street. A grocer whose stock included also a small assortment of fresh meat, was at hand, ready to give prompt attention to a cash customer, for whose order a large basket was put in requisition; and in a few moments more a stout German lad had carried the basket up the four flights of stairs, and deposited it on the floor of that attic room.

Arabella had not quite understood the meaning or purpose of Rolina's sudden departure. A quiet remark, the words of which were not clear, had a tone of hope and encouragement, and the poor woman had sat there alone, with her sick child, so overcome and exhausted by hunger and fatigue, that she was really unable to make any further effort. She was, however, cherishing an impression—scarcely strong enough to be called a hope—that the strange visitor would come back, or else more likely send some one to minister to her wants in that hour of destitution and sorrow.

But when her visitor returned, followed by the German lad carrying a bushel basket, so full that it could hold nothing more, she rose and stood gazing with speechless bewilderment. Was this a real scene? She actually drew her hand over her eyes, to assure herself that what she had supposed she was looking at was actually before her.

In the meantime, without waiting for poor Arabella to recover from her bewilderment, or frame words to thank her, Rolina had laid aside her hat and wrap, and

began to prepare some food for the almost famishing woman. Stimulated by the sight, Arabella came to her assistance, and a meal was soon ready.

"We will sit down together," was the thought that had been running through the minds of both, while preparing that meal; and they now did so, without waiting for the formality of an invitation on either side.

"Please don't go quite yet," said Arabella, when they had finished their repast, and turning to our heroine with that yearning desire for sympathy and compassion which generous kindness always awakens; and a burst of tears was followed by the sad story of her life.

How true it is that the chord of mutual sympathy which links the members of the human family together always vibrates responsively when it feels the magic touch of kindness.

For those who have been reared in opulence, poverty under any circumstances is hard to bear, because of the contrast which memory never fails to bring up, and which the imagination sometimes intensifies, as if to make the torture more unendurable. But when actual suffering comes—cold, hunger and disease—and the only way by which relief can be obtained is by accepting it at the cold hand of unsympathizing, public charity, it may be difficult, sometimes, for the recipient to determine which is harder to endure—the suffering, or the charity, so-called.

The once proud, haughty, petted daughter of the wealthy merchant, though now suffering and almost dying from actual want, would have died, and would have seen her starving infant perish at her side, rather than accept aid from that young stranger had not the potent influence of a gentle kindness and genuine sym-

pathy found its way through the hard crust that had gathered around her heart.

"On the night of our elopement," Arabella continued, after detailing the events with which we are already acquainted, "we drove to the house of a strange minister, and were married. As soon as we were again alone, my husband, Mr. Jones, demanded the money and jewels I had brought with me from home. To this demand, made in a stern, and unrelenting manner, I yielded, but it struck a death-blow to my heart. The love, or rather infatuation which he had excited in my mind, received at that moment a fatal stroke. Could I have rushed away from him at that instant, and placed myself again under my father's protection I would have done so. But I was in his power; he had my money, and he had me. He then took me to a suite of rooms he had engaged at a hotel in Newark, and for a few weeks his kind, caressing attentions made me try to think that after all I had a husband who loved me and would make me happy.

"But the end of hope soon came," said the wretched woman, clasping her hands. "When the money that I had given him was gone, and the last of my jewels were at the pawnbroker's, he demanded that I should appeal to my father to forgive me and take me home, so that I could once more prey upon his fortune, and in that way obtain money to be spent in gambling and dissipation by the man who had vowed to cherish and protect me.

"Of course we quarreled, and I learned the utter baseness of the man for whom I had renounced parents, home and respectability. Without money, without any friend to whom I could apply, where could I go but to my father, whose confidence I had abused, whose kind protection I had scorned, and from whose

roof I had fled, when I placed myself and all my hopes in the hands of the man who had beguiled me.

“But no sooner had the first thought of separating from him absolutely, and seeking the forgiveness and protection of my father, taken form in my mind than he seemed to detect it, and his manner at once changed to an appearance of the tenderest sympathy and devotion. With tears he besought my pardon for the wrongs he had done me, and pleaded so eloquently with me to appeal to my father for aid that would give him a chance to win an honorable name for himself and obtain a happy home for me, that I again forgave him everything, and seemed to feel a return of my former affection for him.

“Night after night, at that time, he would be away until midnight; but often when he returned and found me sitting up waiting for him, he would chide me for depriving myself of rest, with the most loving solicitude. In this way he gradually regained my confidence, until at last I resolved that for my husband’s sake as well as for my own, I would see my father once more, and make a determined effort to obtain his forgiveness and effect a reconciliation. All the best articles of my clothing were at the pawnbrokers’ with my jewels. I had, however, some garments remaining with which I could make a decent appearance; and one pleasant day I dressed in the most becoming manner possible under the circumstances, and went to my father’s place of business.”

Rolina had listened in silence up to this point, studying with quiet interest the features of the narrator; but now, moved by an irresistible curiosity to gain a clew to the resemblance that had so puzzled her, she interposed.

“What is your father’s name, please? You have not mentioned it, yet.”

“It is because I have brought disgrace upon it; and for that sin the proud spirit of Nicodemus Grimshaw knows no forgiveness.”

Rolina started with an involuntary cry of surprise, while the stern, pitiless features of her accuser in that crowded courtroom, arose before her mental vision. What a strange decree of Providence, that the girl whose character and prospects he had sought to ruin should become the benefactor of his once pampered daughter in this hour of her direst need! Her mind and heart were too full for audible comment; and Arabella went on, not heeding the interruption.

“My father sat in his counting room, busy over his ledger. I went quietly in, and stood for a moment without attracting his attention, nor did he observe me, until, with my heart bursting with repentant remorse, I stooped over and kissed his cheek, as I had been often accustomed to do, when I was the only idol of his heart. Never can I forget the look of delight that brightened his features for an instant, as he wheeled around in his chair, and gazed at me, his face aglow with a glad welcome. I was about to throw myself on his breast, when back to his brain came the remembrance of my sin, and his pride rose and conquered every gentle emotion.

“Waving me from him as though my touch were contagion, he drew back and sat down at some distance, his smile of welcome gone, and his lips tightly compressed. I looked at him for a moment in silent distress and anguish; then approaching him with outstretched hands, I fell on my knees before him. Again he repulsed me.

“‘Father!’ was all I could say. My overtaxed nerves gave way, and I broke into convulsive sobbing. Through my tears I could see by the working of his

features that a conflict between love and pride was going on within him, and pride soon rose paramount to every other consideration. He looked up coldly, and with a freezing formality, asked:

“‘Shall I call you Miss, or Mrs.?’”

“A bomb exploding at my feet could not have caused me greater horror than the words uttered by my own father. I cannot go over again all that followed. Our recriminations became mutual and fierce, and the interview ended by one of his porters being directed to remove me from the store.

“Since then I have never once looked upon the face of Nicodemus Grimshaw. But even here, in my wretched misery and poverty, I often hear of his liberal donations to missionary and other charitable objects, while I, his only daughter, his only child—am starving, almost at his door.

“All recollection of where I went and what happened during the next few hours is blotted from my memory. I must have been wandering somewhere the whole of that afternoon, without sufficient strength or resolution to return and report my failure to my husband. I can only remember that it was dark when I reached the place I called home, and met my husband.

“The scene that followed is branded upon my memory as with characters of fire. My husband heard my story to the end with a cold, insulting sneer, and then poured upon me a storm of vindictive denunciation more bitter and cruel than I had ever heard from him before. And his anger and abuse was directed not against my father, who had so cruelly repulsed me, but against me, his wife, who had forsaken at his bidding a home replete with every luxury, to unite my destiny with his; a home where my every wish had been gratified, except as related to this fatal step.

“From that day our course has been steadily downward. Sometimes I have been able to earn a trifle by performing in some part of the afterpieces at second-class theaters, sometimes by singing or dancing, and at times, alas! in low concert saloons. Such are the straits to which two short years and my husband’s dissipated habits have brought me! In several instances I have been conscious that I was recognized and sneered at by the very persons who in former days have tried in vain to solicit my notice or favor.

“Illness overtook me, but I was obliged to work on, until exhausted nature could hold out no longer, and I laid down and prayed for death, but it would not come. To-day, for the first time since my sickness, I ventured out to seek food for myself and child. Impelled by an irresistible impulse, my steps once more turned in the direction of my father’s store. He was not taken un-awares this time. The contingency was one for which he evidently was prepared, and I was immediately ordered out by one of his clerks, and not even permitted to approach his private office. As a last resort I made application to Tot, as he had employed me for awhile, before I fell sick, and—you know the result.

“I have often heard Dr. Simpeox, our pastor, dilate upon the story of the prodigal son, who was received back with joy and feasting, although he had wasted all his substance with riotous living, and telling us that in this way the Lord is ready to treat every returning prodigal however far he may have wandered away; and yet I, a prodigal but repentant daughter, can find no way to return to a father who professes to be a servant and follower of that same Lord.”

Arabella’s sad story was ended, and our young heroine sat for a few moments, contemplating the mournful consequences of one false step, and thinking,

also, of what might have been her own terrible fate had she been thrown upon the sea of life in this great city, without the protection and care of the self-forgetful, devoted friends, who had been to her as guardian angels.

But the time was pressing, and there were dear ones in her haven of rest and comfort awaiting her coming. So promising another visit, and placing in the hands of the unfortunate and suffering woman a small sum for the supply of her immediate wants, Rolina bent her steps toward home, carrying with her the gratifying remembrance of the repeated thanks and blessings showered upon her by poor Arabella.

As she laid her weary head upon the pillow that night Rolina's heart and brain were teeming with mournful recollections of that sad, crushed and broken life, wrecked like so many others, upon the rock of willful disobedience.

Every human life has its measure of sorrowful experiences, in some form; and yet there always stands out, in bold and startling relief, the solemn warnings:

“The way of the transgressor is hard.”

CHAPTER XXVI.

FAMILY JARS.

“ True be it said whatever man it said,
That love with gall and honey doth abound;
But if the one be with the other weighed,
For every drachm of honey therein found
A pound of gall doth over it redound.”

—*Spenser's Faerie Queen.*

WE have been so closely following the diverse and varying fortunes of our more prominent characters, that we have bestowed but little attention upon the two happy couples whose felicity we had occasion to comment upon some time ago. It is not right, however, to neglect them longer, and we must now afford ourselves a brief glimpse of their conjugal progress.

The honeymoon—as all honeymoons should—glided safely and auspiciously along, except for a slight *contretemps* in the case of Mr. and Mrs. Glazebrook, which we incidentally described; but when that eventful period had passed, the honey all gone, the next thing in order were the *jars*—and they *were* jars!

Mrs. Musty's establishment had been prospering. Her boarders and lodgers had multiplied, and her face wore a serene, contented expression. Her latest addition had come in the person of a respectable widower, whose fierce-looking whiskers, steel gray eyes, and military air and manner, inspired her with the belief that he was a mysterious and important individual; especially after he had covered the walls of his room with elaborately designed and brilliantly colored engravings of hostile engagements on land and sea. Occasionally, also, in their incidental *têtes-à-têtes* he vaguely hinted at some very remarkable periods of his

life, and in this way her impressions were strengthened and confirmed.

One afternoon, Mr. and Mrs. Musty were seated in their cozy room, the buxom hostess busy over some stockings, while her better half was engaged in the somewhat futile attempt to extract news from a paper held upside down. For some time both preserved silence; then folding his paper and giving it an impatient toss on to the table, the sexton glanced over at his wife.

"Dinner was fifteen minutes late to-day, Mrs. Musty."

The lady lifted her eyes serenely.

"I am sorry, Ezekiah, but it was an accident. I was interested in listening to an astonishing story that Major Stephens was relating, and forgot the time."

Mr. Musty drew an enormous handkerchief from his pocket, and applied it to his nose, with a result that would only be slightly exaggerated if compared to an eruption of Vesuvius.

"I'd rather you wouldn't blow your nose quite so loud, Mr. Musty. You may disturb the major, who is now in his room in the third story."

"It is quite evident, Mrs. Musty, that you care more for that major than you do for me or my nose," retorted her husband, with a look that implied that he would like to give himself or some other sexton a job.

"What do you mean by such insinuations, Ezekiah?" asked the mistress of the domicile. She used that word a great deal, evidently considering it very significant; and on this occasion she repeated it, and with more emphasis the second time:

"Say, old man, I'd like to know what your insinuations are directed at?"

"At just what you told me a minute ago. You said you found the major very agreeable company, and spent your time with him, and forgot all about me and my dinner."

"You lying scoundrel!" exploded Mrs. Musty, springing to her feet, and facing the culprit. "How dare you exaggerate in that way? And you a church member and a sexton, working around dead folks all the time, and reminded in that way that *you* have got to die before long."

"No wonder your mind is on my dying," retorted the victim. "I have no doubt you and the major would be quite willing to officiate as chief mourners."

"Ezekiah, you are a cruel and wicked man. You know I love you, mean as you are. Why don't you own up that you told a story in saying that I said——"

"Oh, bosh! who cares whether you said you were interested in the major or in his talk. But perhaps I did twist your words a little. I know I am a church member, but so are you, and you ought not to be so thick with that boarder—a stranger almost. I tell you, Mrs. Musty, I have seen a good deal of the world; and boarders give the divorce lawyers and grave-diggers more business than any other class of men. You better subside, Mrs. Musty, and tell me just what the major said to you, word for word, and let me nip him in the bud."

"*You* nip him! Why, Ezekiah, you wouldn't dare to speak to him."

"Wouldn't I? Mrs. Musty, you will please let me have the exact purport of that conversation."

"Well, really, I can't just remember now, only it was very remarkable," replied the lady. "Major Stephens is an exceedingly gifted man."

"Humph, dare say. No doubt you think so."

Mrs. Musty regarded her liege lord with open-eyed astonishment.

"What do you mean, Ezekiah?"

"Mean?" echoed Musty, warming with his subject.

"I mean that you and this here lodger chap are getting altogether too friendly. It's nothing but Major Stephens from morning till night. I ain't a-going to have him winking and squinting at my wife, military or no military. I shall tell him to walk as soon as his month is up."

Mrs. Musty put her handkerchief to her eyes.

"I didn't think you could be so cruel, Ezekiah. If I *am* your wife I haven't lost *all* my good looks, and I don't see any harm in being civil to a nice man like Major Stephens."

"Well, *I* do, when it makes you neglect your husband's dinner," retorted the sexton. "That there military chap has just bewitched you, and I shall tell him to pack up his traps and look for lodgings where the women folks have got more time to gossip with him."

The landlady quite broke down at this last threat.

"Ezekiah, just think how long that room was vacant, and what a good price the major pays—and he's always punctual, too. You know this is the first time anything has gone wrong on my account, and I won't do it again, if it makes you jealous! So let's make up and be friends."

The sexton reflected a moment. It *would* be a good deal of money to lose.

"If you will promise to have no more to do with that objectionable individual than is absolutely necessary, Mrs. Musty, and also that to-day's tardiness shall not be repeated, I'll overlook it this time, and—and forgive you."

"Oh, you dear old soul!" cried the relieved woman, throwing her arms around his neck. "And now do tell me more about that grand funeral that is coming off to-morrow. Of course you are going to take me——"

The sexton interrupted her with a dignified wave of his hand.

"I am not aware, Mrs. Musty, that your name is on the invited list. This is a very exclusive affair."

"Invited fiddlesticks! Ain't you the undertaker, and have not I, your wife, a right to go?"

"On ordinary occasions, perhaps; but at an affair of this kind, although the undertaker is indispensable, his wife is neither expected nor desired. You can go to the church, and see the flowers and the coffin, and then come home again. You mustn't expect to ride in one of the carriages."

"Come home, indeed!" echoed his spouse indignantly. "You know very well, Musty, that there's nothing I so much delight in as a grand funeral and I want to see everything at this one, after all you've said about it—the draped house, the floral decorations and the coffin, and the last looks and crying, and then I want to ride to the church and cemetery. Why, Ezekiah, you know I wouldn't miss it for anything. You pretend to think that I like the major, and just to please you I am willing to avoid him, and now you would try to deprive me of the satisfaction of going to a grand funeral."

"Can't help it," was the terse rejoinder. "You shan't stir one step to this one, I say."

"Then I say I will! Things have come to a pretty pass, indeed, if I am to be deprived of all my privileges and enjoyments! I will not submit to such tyranny. You'll drive me to my own funeral, if you go on this way much longer;" and she buried her face in her handkerchief.

The hardest thing in the world to manage is a crying woman. For some moments Musty sat nonplussed. His feelings would have prompted him to have reduced her right then and there to a state of gentle submission, by such means as husbands were accustomed to employ

with refractory wives in less advanced stages of civilization; but a single glance at the proportions and strongly developed muscles of the lady under consideration, convinced him of the impracticability of any such measure. He leaned forward, at last, and looked at his wife very kindly, inspired with a bright idea.

"It's time to see about getting supper ready, Mrs. Musty."

"Don't care if it is," snapped the lady from behind her tear-drenched handkerchief. "I'm not going to work my fingers off for a tyrant. You shan't taste another meal in this house until you promise to take me to that funeral to-morrow. You promised to love and cherish me, Ezekiah, and if that don't mean letting me go to funerals, I'd like to know what it's good for anyway!"

"It may mean it according to *your* reading, but not according to *mine*, Mrs. Musty," responded her inexorable husband, feeling, however, somewhat alarmed at this declaration of war; for, whatever, the landlady's failings might be, she possessed the cardinal merit of being an excellent cook. "*You* vowed, madam, to 'love, honor, and obey.' Now, I command you to go and get my supper ready."

"Not a step," responded the lady grimly, resolved to "fight it out on that line if it took all summer." "I was intending to make one of your favorite puddings, too," she added craftily; "but I'll spare myself that trouble now!"

"Have your own way, then!" exclaimed Musty, surrendering at discretion. "You are bound to make a fool of yourself, and I may as well let you do it. But I can tell you one thing. Though you may get into the house with the rest, when it comes to the carriages, you'll find yourself counted out."

"Will I?" echoed his wife triumphantly. "You'll see! Oh, you are a dear old soul," she added, with restored good humor. "I believe you do love me, after all, and I'll never speak another cross word to you as long as I live."

"Very glad to hear it, I'm sure," muttered Musty, adding, *sotto voce*: "Wonder how long a woman generally remembers a promise? Hope you'll be willing to stay at home after to-morrow."

"There's one thing more, Ezekiah," said his subdued partner, smiling contentedly. "I must have a new bonnet to wear. If I had thought of it yesterday I wouldn't have put all my rent money in the bank, but you must let me have some until the next bills come in from the boarders."

"All right; if it don't cost too much," said Musty, unwilling to provoke another collision. "What color?"

"Blue, with red roses and a white feather," replied his wife promptly. "That'll look splendid."

The sexton held up his hands in horror.

"Blue! with scarlet roses—to wear at a *funeral*! Are you crazy Mrs. Musty?"

"Not if I know myself. *I'm* to wear the bonnet, not you. I want something that people will look at, so hand over your money, and I'll go for it to-night."

Musty held his hand over his pocket with heroic resolution.

"Not one cent for a bonnet of *that* color. I'll get you a black or brown bonnet, but a blue one, with red roses and a white feather—I'd rather get you a coffin."

Musty did not mean to make that last remark, but his mind was on coffins, and the words dropped out before he realized what he was saying.

Another and more violent tempest ensued; but mutual

explanations made and accepted, and the conversation turned once more to the bonnet.

"I know more about funerals than you do," said the reconciled and affectionate husband. "And if you wear such a bonnet you will be laughed at."

"Then let them laugh, you old skinflint," retorted his better half. "I will have it and wear it."

"And I say you will not—no, never, never!"

The last "never" was emphasized with a stamp that elicited a responsive jar from every article of furniture in the room, with a prolonged rumbling frightful to hear.

"You aggravating old impostor!" screamed Mrs. Musty. "If you dare to stamp that way again in my house I'll call in an officer and have you arrested for a lunatic. I'll let you see whether I have any rights. This house is mine, and not yours. I took you out of pity, and that time I *did* make a great fool of myself. You're a cross, aggravating, *musty* old fellow—the meanest man that ever lived. You get jealous at nothing, and then when I give up all my innocent little pleasures to satisfy you this is how you repay me. Mr. Musty!" again springing from her chair and stamping her foot on the floor. "I'll go and I'll wear that bonnet, too, if I have to *steal* it."

It is generally supposed that Mrs. Musty went to that funeral, and wore the bonnet discussed; but the reader is of course aware that in every family quarrel there always comes a time when it is proper to let the curtain drop, and allow the parties immediately interested to finish in their own way. So adopting that course, we will conduct the reader to the dwelling of our old acquaintance, Mrs. Glazebrook *née* Miss Pringle.

It was Friday evening at the home of the Rev. Philip Glazebrook. The family had finished supper, and the

table was being cleared by a girl of thirteen, feeble-looking and small for her age, who filled Rolina's vacant place. The pastor's children had not grown in Sophia's good graces as rapidly as former indications had seemed to warrant. The enchanted view that distance had imparted to the little urchins in the estimation of their prospective stepmother had been dissipated on a nearer inspection.

One of the children—little Philip, the youngest—had been quite ill for four or five days. The other children, having finished their supper, were amusing themselves in the best way they could. Mrs. Glazebrook, was, however, taking no notice of them or their sick brother, but was sitting with her hands folded in her lap, gazing into futurity. Her husband, with an anxious glance now and then at the sick child, was carefully reading and occasionally correcting the notes of a short address he intended to read at the prayer-meeting that evening.

"It is nearly time for us to start, Philip," said his wife at last, looking up.

"I shall start presently," the gentleman laid a slight emphasis on the pronoun. "But I think the indisposition of Philip," glancing toward the child, who was tossing feverishly upon a lounge, "will require your presence at home."

"I don't, then. He is no worse, and will do very well until we return. An hour or so won't make any difference."

"His condition is critical, Mrs. Glazebrook. I think it no more than consistent with your maternal responsibilities that you remain at his side this evening."

"I cannot help what you think," retorted the lady. "I promised several of our leading people that I would be at the meeting to-night, and relate my experience,

and I would not disappoint them for anything. I cannot neglect my religious duties on account of a sick child, Mr. Glazebrook."

"Duty begins at *home*, Mrs. Glazebrook," reminded her partner. "I am not willing that you should leave the child to-night. The Bible enjoins it upon wives to be obedient to their husbands, and in this case I must require your obedience. I am sorry to debar you from the pleasure of attending this meeting; but you can relate your experience some other time; and for that matter I have heard it so often that I can tell it for you."

Mrs. Glazebrook's lips curled scornfully.

"Sorry for me! I guess so! You know you are jealous of my influence in the meetings, and glad of any chance to keep me at home. The very thing you used to praise me for, too, before our marriage. I know the Bible as well as you do, and it says 'let your light shine.' "

"If you would quote the whole of the passage, Mrs. Glazebrook, you would see that the way to let your light shine is by good works; and there is no better work for a wife and mother than to take care of a sick child. As for your accusation that I am jealous of you, it is unjust and calumnious, but I will let it pass without further comment. In regard to this child, however, I must in this instance assert my husbandly authority, and command you to remain at home and take care of him, and see that the medicine is administered according to the doctor's directions."

"Husbandly authority!" was the contemptuous response. "I haven't missed a single prayer-meeting since I have been a member of that church—long before you came there, Mr. Glazebrook—and I don't mean to allow the trifling sickness of a child to lure me

into backsliding. We are commanded to bear our cross at all times, Mr. Glazebrook; and although mine is a heavy one, and I meet opposition where I least expected it, I mean to continue a faithful soldier, and keep marching right on, especially when my call is so clear and imperative as it is to-night. Do you think I would allow any consideration to cause me to lose the chance of inaugurating such a revival as arose from my efforts last time? You have a good deal to say about the duties of a mother. Perhaps you forget that I am not the mother of these young ones."

"You promised to take care of them as your own, and supply the place of a mother to them," said the husband. "And if you had not so promised you would never have been my wife."

"If I had supposed that taking care of another woman's children was going to interfere with my religious duties I would not have married *you*," was the retort.

"There is no more time now," said Mr. Glazebrook, "for this unpleasant and unprofitable discussion. It is time for me to be at the meeting. As for the revival, I consider myself fully competent to direct and sustain any undertaking of that sort, and I do not feel the need of your assistance. If you are desirous to set an example that will have the most beneficial effect upon your neighbors, it will be that of ministering to those who have the strongest claim upon you. Let me say, therefore, that on no account whatever, are you to abandon that sick child, until I return to relieve you, which I will do as early as possible." And taking his hat he left.

Mrs. Glazebrook stood with compressed lips until her husband had left the house. Then with a glance at the sick child who had fallen into a troubled slumber, she summoned the little servant girl,

"Bring my hat and shawl, Sally, and don't be all night about it, either. And if that young one," indicating the patient by a backward jerk of her thumb, "wakes up or gets troublesome, give him a little of this," she pointed to a vial that stood upon the mantel-piece, bearing a label marked "laudanum."

"And if he gets very much worse, ma'am, shall I come for you?" Sally asked somewhat anxiously.

A ringing box upon the ear that sent her staggering back to the wall rewarded her temerity in asking that question.

"Come for me, indeed!" echoed her mistress. "Just let me see you try it, that's all. Now get my things—be quick."

Sally hurried off, holding one hand to her face, and sobbing as loudly as she dared, and Mrs. Glazebrook was soon off to the meeting. One significant glance was exchanged with her husband, as she entered the place of worship, and she then passed on to her accustomed seat.

There was a flutter of expectancy when at the appointed moment Sister Glazebrook arose to speak. With an expression of profound humility, she stated that she feared she had backslidden since the last time it was her privilege to address them. She felt painfully conscious of her many shortcomings, but she was trying not to allow *anything*—with a significant emphasis intended for the benefit of one of her auditors, at least—to be a stumbling-block in her path. In fact she held forth in this strain with so much unction that by the time she was through many of the brethren and some of the sisters were sobbing, and that revival seemed perilously imminent.

When the meeting ended, many expressions of commendation greeted the now satisfied sister.

"Such a sweet woman was Sister Glazebrook! such an appropriate and worthy associate for their pastor! If there only were more of such burning and shining lights, how the cause would go forward. They did hope she would speak again and often, they felt so much benefited. It was really a blessing to have such a sister in Israel among them," and more of the same sort.

While the reflection from the church lamps lighted her face as she stood in the door leaning upon her husband's arm and dispensing advice and parting exhortations with the promiscuous liberality that had distinguished her as Miss Pringle, Sister Glazebrook seemed, to her now unanimously enthusiastic admirers, almost like an angel from heaven. But when the church doors were closed, and veiled by the darkness of the night this same angel was wending her way home at the side of her husband, her looks and words would not have led any one to suppose that she had descended from heaven or would ever be likely to go there.

Half an hour later, the doctor who had called in and was still there when the minister and wife got back, said:

"This child was seriously ill, Mr. Glazebrook, as I told you, but with prudent care and faithful nursing he should have recovered. Now, there is no hope. He has been poisoned with laudanum, of which the little girl here—a very incompetent nurse—tells me she gave him a teaspoonful. Three drops was the prescribed dose, plainly marked on the vial."

Again the curtain falls; but it does not shut out or cover the truth that even a stepmother is better employed in taking care of her husband's sick children, than in relating her experience at prayer-meeting.

CHAPTER XXVII.

“INASMUCH.”

“In faith and hope the world will disagree,
But all mankind's concern is charity;
All must be false that thwart this one great end,
And all of God, that bless mankind, or mend.”

—Pope.

WITH a heart swelling high with pride and fond regard Mr. Glenn welcomed his lovely little wife as she emerged from Orpheus Hall, and when he had her all to himself in the carriage, he embraced her so fervently that she looked up into his face with laughing surprise.

“Why, Arthur, one would think we had been separated for a year instead of a couple of hours. You don't love me as much as all that, do you?”

“You are my precious wife,” replied Mr. Glenn in a tone whose fervor and pathos amply supplied the lack of any more extended answer.

“I know that,” she said, nestling closer to him. “And do tell me, how did you like the performance to-night?”

“Not at all my love.”

“Well, really, you are not as appreciative as some other people,” replied his wife with a pretty little pout. “You should have seen the superb bouquet that was handed me. I presented it, in turn, to Bessie Ormsby, as I left her.”

"Thereby proving *your* appreciation," laughed Mr. Glenn, stroking the little hand he held. "As to your appearance, it never could be otherwise than attractive to me; but I did not like to see my dear wife placed out there as a mark for general inspection and criticism, however favorable it might be," he added, with an exultant remembrance of that overheard conversation.

"Nor did I like it either, Arthur, to tell you the honest truth. If I were a professional, or had decided histrionic talent that would exalt it into an art, it might be all right. But as an amateur, and as you say, merely a mark for careless scrutiny, I did not like it. I felt as if I were out of my element entirely."

"Neither do I like your present associations," pursued her husband gravely. "From what I can glean of their character and conversation, their test of worth is the amount of money a man is believed to possess. We certainly have not attempted to deceive any of these people in regard to the extent of our worldly possessions. We are thus far very little more than strangers in the city. They have seen us occupying a handsome suite of rooms at a first class hotel, and your style of dress and general appearance when you have gone among them has justified the belief that you could meet any expenditure in that direction that the occasion might require. When they learn that we are really poor, as tried by their standard—as they will, when we take a house and furnish it in a style no better than we can safely afford—the barometer of your popularity will descend with surprising rapidity. This appalling experience is before my dear little wife, and she may as well be prepared for it. Castles built in the air may be very alluring to the eye, but they are not safe habitations to live in."

"Bessie Ormsby is genuine and sincere," said Mrs.

Glenn deprecatingly. "I value her friendship very highly, Arthur."

"She is an exception, I think, Sadie. But it hurts my sense of justice and probity to see you connected, even remotely, with this hollow, superficial way of living, and it will only urge me into securing at an earlier date than I originally intended a house which I have for some time had in view, and thus make known our true financial status to these friends of yours, and see how they will stand the test."

Mrs. Glenn, as our readers have seen, possessed an excellent disposition, and much sterling good sense; and yet she must have been immeasurably above the average of the better class of good little women, not to have experienced a slight pang of mortified vanity, in view of the probable consequences of the step her husband was preparing to take.

"Oh, Arthur, so soon?" she exclaimed with a little quiver in her voice. "And the winter festivities just commencing. As you say, we have not intentionally deceived them, and we are not responsible for what people *think*."

"We have been virtually sailing under false colors, my love," answered Mr. Glenn. "We shall be much more comfortable and happy when we take our true position before the world, and no longer do anything that will even give rise to an impression that our means are greater than they really are. If your friends are of the right sort, they will not be adversely affected; but if their esteem, as I strongly suspect, is gauged by your husband's supposed bank account, the sooner we know it the better. So if possible we will, I think, go to housekeeping within a fortnight, even though it involve the awful necessity of making our farewell obeisance to Mrs. Ormsby and her 'dear five hundred.'

And if that should happen, I do not believe it would be a serious or even a real misfortune. My little wife will soon find friends who will appreciate the true, imperishable riches of mind and heart."

The carriage having reached the hotel by this time, Mr. Glenn raised the slightly downcast face of his wife, and gave her a fond kiss; then alighting, lifted her to the sidewalk, paid and dismissed the driver, and they ascended to their apartments.

The arrangements for the house were soon completed, and everything in order; the furniture containing many neat and useful, and a few really elegant articles. And then Mr. Glenn, as he expressed it, "took his birdie to her nest, which, if not lined with finest down, was cozy, warm and attractive, and which only needed her bright presence and sweet voice to transform it into an earthly paradise."

Mrs. Ormsby paid her friend one visit and but one, after she was settled in her new home. A single scrutinizing glance around the modest dwelling convinced her of the utter impracticability of any further intimacy in that direction.

"A piece of wholesale imposition!" she exclaimed afterward, in conversation with Mrs. Newcome and a few other favored auditors. "I was never so taken in before. I might have known from her diffidence that she was a nobody. Anyhow, I only took her up to please Bessie; she seemed so perfectly captivated with her appearance and manners. But Bessie is not at all like me in her estimate of people."

"One cannot be too careful, nowadays, in avoiding these *parvenues*, there are so many," said Mrs. Newcome in her coldest tone. "It is fortunate that the acquaintance has been so brief. We can shake her off easily."

And accordingly, little Mrs. Glenn, having been weighed by her fashionable friends in their financial scales, and found so sadly wanting, was "shaken off" after the most approved fashion, and the current of "upper tendom" flowed on as before. About three weeks after Mrs. Ormsby's visit to the home of her late "dearest friend," she met her one day on the street, and the young wife experienced for the first time, the exhilarating effect of the "cut direct" by which she was made to understand that any further recognition under such altered circumstances was quite out of the question.

The little woman had one hearty crying spell over this disclosure of the stability of earthly and especially fashionable friendships; and then resolutely wiping her eyes, smiled at her husband's rallying words and turned down the leaf upon that pleasant yet fleeting chapter in the book of her life experience.

Several quiet weeks had passed. Happy in her husband, in her home, and in the contemplation of a delightful prospect, soon to become a welcome reality, the days sped lightly along to Mrs. Glenn. One evening, after dinner, she ensconced herself at her husband's side, and laying her head against his shoulder, said:

"Do you know what I have been thinking of to-day, Arthur?"

"I am not good at guessing thoughts," replied her husband, smiling. "The thoughts even of husbands and wives are their own, until they desire to reveal them, which they often do by looks, without waiting for words. Besides, some thoughts are more perfectly and fully conveyed by looks than in any other way. The lips, also have a language of their own, which does not require the aid of articulate sounds," and the kiss that finished the sentence illustrated one of the ways in which that language could be expressed.

"You have been running over a good deal of philosophical foolishness," said his wife, a very little vexed at his not even trying to guess what she was thinking about. "And as you are probably incapable of any further exertion at present I will tell you. I have been thinking that I would like to take a child from the 'Refuge' and give her a home with us. I saw several the day I visited the place, large and old enough to be very useful. The managers desire to find homes for them so as to afford vacancies for newcomers—at least so I was given to understand. And you know we shall be likely to need some help before long, in addition to what we now have."

"Yes, I know," said Mr. Glenn, with an accent of deepest tenderness in his tone. "And so your benevolent thoughts have been turning in that direction eh? Well, I have no objection to the experiment. Shall we go to-morrow, and make a selection? What amount of red tape is necessary to effect the removal of one of those waifs from the protecting wing of the 'Refuge'?"

"I don't know of any. The ladies meet there monthly, and to-morrow is their day, I believe. Mrs. Newcome is now one of the board, and I have been introduced to the others. I suppose that will be a sufficient guarantee as to respectability and general good character," she added, laughing.

"Very likely—at least, perhaps so. We will take an early start, so as to have abundant time to settle this momentous question. Fortunately I can spare the day as well as not."

The board of managers were in session when Mr. and Mrs. Glenn arrived at the 'Refuge' the next day.

"If you will make out your application in writing I will take it in, and they can act upon it at once," said

the assistant who ushered them into the waiting room.

Mrs. Glenn complied. Half an hour later a general rising and pushing back of chairs was heard from the adjoining room. Then the door opened, and Mrs. Le Grange entered the apartment where they were seated.

"Good-afternoon," she said graciously. "You wish to procure one of our children, I understand. Would you like to take her to-day?"

"If you please. It would not be very convenient for us to come again," replied Mrs. Glenn.

"Well, your application was favorably received, through the indorsement of Mrs. Newcome, who tells us that she has seen you, and thinks you would be a very suitable person to take charge of one of the girls, and would be likely to make a companion of her," continued Mrs. Le Grange. "The children are in the schoolroom and you can make a selection at once if you choose."

They entered the schoolroom, and in a few minutes Mrs. Glenn indicated a girl about thirteen years old.

"What is that girl's name, Miss Noyes?" asked the lady directress.

"Sarah Jane Ray," replied the teacher.

"Oh, yes. Come here, Sarah Jane."

The child obeyed with alacrity.

"Would you like to go and live with this lady, Sarah Jane?"

"Yes, ma'am," Sarah's eyes sparkled with eagerness.

"Do you think she will suit you?" pursued Mrs. Le Grange addressing her visitors.

"Yes. The work she will have to do will be light, and she looks like a capable child," answered Mrs. Glenn.

"Well, go to Miss Banks, Sarah Jane, and let her get you ready," directed the lady. "They seem very glad to go," she added, as the child left the room. "I suppose it is because they like the idea of a change. You will take her for a couple of months, and then if you are both suited, and the child likes her home, our secretary will prepare a paper for you to sign."

At this moment the schoolroom clock struck twelve, and the children were dismissed to the yard. A number, however, gathered around Sarah Jane, who had returned with Miss Banks, and stood gazing with wistful looks upon the sweet-faced lady henceforth to be the guardian of their old playmate.

"Does she take any clothing with her?" Mrs. Glenn asked.

"Oh, yes. We allow them their best suit, and two changes of underclothing," replied Miss Banks. "Good-by, Sarah Jane," she drew the child toward her and kissed her. "Be a good girl."

"Yes. Do your best to please Mrs. Glenn, Sarah Jane," echoed Mrs. Le Grange, with a slight melancholy accent, which prompted in the mind of Mrs. Glenn's wicked husband a remembrance of the adage—"Blessings brighten as they take their flight." "Good-by!"

"Good-by, Sarah Jane," chorused the children; and Sarah went with her new guardian, and in due time reached the place which was to be, for a time at least, her home.

"Is *this* your best dress, Sarah?" Mrs. Glenn asked, as the little girl, in preparing for bed, took off the frock which showed signs of considerable wear.

"No, ma'am," replied Sarah naively. "'Tain't mine at all. It was Augusta Brown's, see, her name is marked on the band inside."

"Why!" exclaimed Mrs. Glenn, as an examination verified the child's statement. "Miss Banks said you took your *own* dress—your best one—with you, to-day."

"They gave that to Augusta Brown for every day, 'cause this was too short for her, and I was going away," replied Sarah. "I think it was real mean, for mine ~~was~~ new, and ever so much nicer than this."

Mrs. Glenn did not think it worth while to ask any more questions, just then, but returned to her husband with a very serious face, and repeated the child's story, adding:

"It is not the dress I care about, but the principle. If Mrs. Le Grange did not know, Miss Banks did, that it was a downright falsehood, a willful deception. So much of the clothing for the children is donated outright, too, as their report for last year states; and as they are to be relieved of all further care and expense on her account, they might at least have given her the good, new dress that was made for her, and fitted her, and not palm off another child's half-worn and ill-fitting garment upon us, and tell an untruth about it, besides."

"My dear," said her husband gravely. "I have long ago arrived at the unpleasant conclusion that a so-called charitable institution is not one of the best places to look for principle. I apprehend that your little *protégée* will have disclosures to make, if you think best to invite them, that will astonish you, and shake your faith in charitable inventions."

"You didn't have anything like this at the 'Refuge' did you, Sarah?" Mrs. Glenn asked the next morning, laughing at the child's eager, expectant expression, as she poured for her a brimming cup of fragrant coffee.

"No, ma'am," answered Sarah, eying the luxury greedily. "Only skim milk and water once a day."

"*Skim milk!*" echoed her mistress. "How was that?"

"Why, they used to skim the top off to make cream potatoes for the teachers," answered Sarah Jane.

Neither Mrs. Glenn nor her husband could refrain from a laugh at this unique description.

"And what did the children have to eat?" asked Mr. Glenn, becoming interested in these charitable revelations. He had left the table a few moments before, and was sitting at the window, looking over the morning paper.

"We had soup three times a week," replied Sarah. "And one day the cook dropped a piece of soap into it, and it tasted *awful*."

"But surely you were not required to eat soup with soap in it?" exclaimed Mrs. Glenn.

"Yes, ma'am; Miss Banks tasted it, and said it wan't bad at all; but she only dipped the end of her spoon into it, and then touched it with her tongue. It made some of the girls sick. How I did wish some good lady would come and take me away! Miss Banks was awful cross sometimes, and beat us like anything. I hate her! I would like to throw this plate right at her, and hit her with it, too."

"Hush, Sarah! Finish your breakfast, and then I will tell you what I want you to do. You must not talk in that way," reproved Mrs. Glenn. She followed her husband out to the hall, so that the child might have no chance for any further confidences of that sort.

"There is a shocking abuse of public confidence, and a wicked misappropriation of money, if half that this child tells me is true," Mrs. Glenn said one evening, when alone with her husband. "The estimate for servants' wages, provisions, and other things is shamefully overdrawn in the report. That poor girl was

half famished when she came, pale and thin, as you know, and has been eating ever since as if she could not get enough. From what she tells me, and from what I also saw when I paid that visit to the 'Refuge,' I am convinced that the food given those poor children is of the plainest and coarsest quality; and not any too much even of that. Now what becomes of the very considerable surplus?"

"Fruit-cake, preserves, and 'cream potatoes' must come in, I suppose, for their share of the accounting," said her husband, laughing. "Unless, perhaps, they are included in the 'sundries,' which, as I noticed form a separate and not inconsiderable item in the report. Whatever the self-denial of those self-sacrificing public servants may be, it is, like that of the 'holy friars,' not of the appetite."

Mrs. Glenn had never been "behind the scenes" in the mimic theater commonly known as "the world," or she would not have been so much surprised at discovering a want of agreement between profession and practice.

"But it is a serious matter, Arthur. No wonder the children are glad to go. As for their religious instruction, I cannot see that it amounts to anything more than a number of set questions, propounded at stated times by Mrs. Le Grange, to which the children return drilled responses, without the least idea of what they really mean."

"Probably not," said her husband. "A species of what might very properly be termed machine religion. And as for any conscious understanding of right and wrong, the children are probably not very far in advance of their teachers. They learn a certain routine of answers, very much as parrots might do, with about the same intelligent appreciation of their import; but

so long as they can 'answer up well' at those periodical catechizings, their spiritual instructors consider their duty satisfactorily discharged."

"It certainly looks very much that way. And when I remember their ostentatious profession of charity and the good they are doing, and their continual solicitations for 'money, more money,' and then by a little calculation discover how much more could be done than they are doing with the amount actually intrusted to them, it seems to me a great iniquity."

"I suppose it is," said Mr. Glenn. "I suppose that not only the place from which you have received, or rather, rescued this child, but very many others of a similar character, are scarcely anything less than 'Rings' in which, under the cloak of charity, a very profitable speculation is carried on at the expense of a confiding and benevolent public, whose contributions are divided among the initiated. And so long as these shameful abuses are practiced under the cover of a professed allegiance to Him who has said—'Inasmuch as ye did it not unto one of the least of these, ye did it not to me'—it is no wonder that the Kingdom of God is still far away."

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When Sarah Jane had been two months in her new home Mrs. Glenn received a visit from the lady secretary of the "Refuge."

"Here are two printed agreements for you to sign," said the secretary. "I'll read one." And having done so, she continued: "The substance of the agreement on your part, as you see, is that you promise to keep Sarah Jane Ray, until she is twenty-one years of age, give her a fair education, and at the end of that time, give her a Bible, a new suit of clothes, and twenty-five dollars. But we have made it a rule lately to have the

money sent to us in yearly instalments of five dollars, to hold in trust for the child until she needs it; so I have made a memorandum to that effect on the margin of the paper here."

"But this is no *agreement*," said Mrs. Glenn. "It is all on one side. I ought to have a paper from you, formally consigning to the child to my guardianship."

"Oh, that's not necessary; these papers will do," said the secretary. "You keep one and we the other. Write your name on mine, please."

Mrs. Glenn complied with some hesitation, and after a due inspection of the child, and a very solicitous injunction to her mistress not to work her too hard, and to report her condition every three months, the secretary took her leave.

"What splendid business managers," said Mr. Glenn, laughing, as he inspected the so-called agreement that evening. "It is too bad to spoil nice white paper in this way. No seals, no witnesses, no consideration on their part; in fact not even dated. And you, a married woman, entering into a covenant without the consent of your husband. If we take care of the child, we will, I think, also take care of the money we are to give her. So if they come or send for the five dollars just refer them to me, my dear."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE ROAD TO RUIN.

A PLEASANT October day was drawing to a close as a young man of about twenty-three years of age stepped from the railroad train that had brought him to New York.

Nelson Alston had been sent to the city by a mercantile house in New England, intrusted with a business commission of some importance, and with thirty-five thousand dollars in money.

Young Alston had never been to the city of New York before, but was considered strictly honest and reliable; and to further guard him against any possible danger, he was provided with a card of introduction to the hotel at which he had been directed to put up, and was instructed to deposit his money in the hotel safe as soon as he reached there, and not to remove it until he had occasion to use it.

It was about 5 o'clock in the afternoon when he arrived at the hotel and registered his name, at the same time handing his introductory card to the clerk. A room was promptly assigned him, his valise sent to it and the key given to him. He then drew out his roll of money to be placed in the safe, but was directed to wait a few moments, until the clerk who kept the key, and who was temporarily absent, should return.

"All right," remarked the young man. "The money is safe enough for the present where it is," and he



SAMUEL JONES.

carefully replaced it in the side pocket of his coat, and having learned that supper would be on the table from 7 till 9, took a seat in the hall adjoining the main entrance, and was quietly observing the things that were said and done by the persons around him.

"A pleasant evening," remarked a stranger, taking a seat by the side of young Alston, and at the same time knocking the ashes from his cigar. "You see they allow us to smoke here. Everything is free and easy in New York."

The young stranger started slightly at the offhand and unexpected salutation; and a whisper, not audible, but as plain as if it had been, told him to take no notice of his would-be acquaintance. But the warning was disregarded; and the next thought that came into his mind was that there certainly was nothing out of the way in answering a civil remark. So he simply said:

"Yes, it is quite a pleasant evening. I observe several of those gentlemen are smoking. As no ladies are here, or likely to come through this hall, I suppose they think it is all right."

"A stranger in the city, I presume?" said the other.

"Ah, why do you think so?" said Alston, while a sudden sensation of distress and insecurity as if some evil were approaching stirred again in his mind.

The answer came this time accompanied by a careless laugh, and a remark that city men always put on a good deal of style, and had certain ways that he could not readily describe, but that enabled him to identify them at sight.

Young Alston now took a square look at his interrogator, and saw a showy looking man, dashily dressed after the prevailing style, with seal ring, watch chain, etc., conspicuously displayed.

The young man then acknowledged that he was a

stranger, and had never been in the city before, and told where he came from, and even gave his name, thinking that so much information as that in regard to himself could do him no possible harm.

"Are you also a stranger here?" he then asked.

"No—not exactly a stranger. I come to the city two or three times a year, sometimes oftener; reside in Boston," was the reply.

This information had the effect to allay those suspicions, or at least the young man tried to remove them—they did not leave of their own accord. Some further conversation ensued, when young Alston, having accepted a cigar from his new acquaintance, found himself taking a turn around a few blocks with him, just to see a little of the city before supper. His business, as he told Mr. Jallops—the name his new friend had given—required immediate dispatch. He must not remain more than three days at most. He would therefore have very little time to see the city, and was very glad to have found one who would so kindly put him on the right track at the start.

Mr. Jallops was, as he told his companion, also stopping at the hotel where they had so fortunately met. As for supper, they could return to that at any time before 9 o'clock, unless sooner urged back by their appetites; and for that matter if they thought more of the novelties they were seeing than of the supper they were losing, they could drop in and get a meal anywhere.

"I am very lucky," said young Alston, "to have you with me. I would not think it quite safe to be out here alone, with this large roll of money in my pocket."

"How much is it?" said Jallops carelessly.

"Thirty-five thousand dollars."

"Oh, is that all? I have often carried more than

three times that amount in my pocket; in fact, I have twice that amount now. You are safe enough while with me. I know every part of the city, and I will see that you do not get into any danger or trouble, and will bring you out all right if you do."

The two men had been thus walking and talking, young Alston giving to his companion, in answer to sundry adroit questions, a true and full history of the business on which he had been sent to New York. This in exchange for important information, confidentially given by his companion in regard to some large and profitable enterprises in which he was engaged.

In this way the time passed on and the hour of 9 was approaching. Till then young Alston had been too much interested to realize that he was growing weary and hungry, but now at last he took advantage of a pause to remark that he was very greatly obliged to Mr. Jallops for having shown him so much of the city, and if it would not be asking too much, he would like to have him go out with him again a little while the next evening. Now, however, he would propose an immediate return to the hotel.

"We shall get a late supper, even now," he said in conclusion. "And besides as I am not accustomed to carry large sums of money, I shall feel more comfortable to see this thirty-five thousand dollars deposited in the safe."

To this proposition Mr. Jallops readily assented, or seemed to; but to the surprise of Nelson Alston, started in a direction directly opposite to the one in which as he supposed they ought to go.

"Can it be possible, my young friend," said Jallops, with an amused laugh, "that you are already lost in New York?"

The young man proposed to refer to the small guide

book with which he had provided himself when he first stepped from the cars. But the guide who had taken him in hand laughed the suggestion out of his mind.

"Those little guide books," he said, "are of no earthly use, that I could ever discover, unless to lead people out of the way. You might as well consult an old almanac! Your head is turned, my young friend, and besides, how far do you suppose we now are from our hotel?"

"About half a mile or so," replied Alston. "I supposed we had been quietly working our way in that direction, the last hour, and must be nearly there, by this time."

"On the contrary," said Jallops, "we have been moving in exactly the opposite direction, and are now at least three and a half miles away. You're lost—your head is turned, that's all. Now I understand why the new turns we have taken, when you led and I followed, have been in the opposite direction from the way you wanted to go. Come, my dear fellow, this is the way. We have an hour's walk before us unless we take a carriage; there is no car route that will help us."

Jallops turned, but Alston stood for a moment. A feeling of indescribable horror had come over him. Could it be that this man whom he had never seen until a few hours before was deliberately leading him astray? taking him perhaps to some place where he would be robbed and then murdered?

Jallops looking back, saw the young man standing irresolute, and exclaimed with a rallying laugh:

"What? given out already? Then we will call a carriage."

"Are you certain?" said Alston, trying to disguise the anxiety he felt, "that this is the right way?"

"Of course I am! I know the streets of New York

as well as if I had made them. You can go that way, if you like; but you will not reach your hotel until you have made the circuit of the globe."

Alston followed on a few blocks like one dazed—bewildered. Again and again he tried to bring to his rescue enough resolution to enable him simply to ask a policeman which way he ought to go; but a strange, bewildering fascination restrained and held him; and he moved on like an automaton, whither he knew not, nor why.

They went a few blocks farther and came in front of a brilliantly lighted saloon, directly opposite a large theater. They had passed the same place half an hour before, and as they did so, Jallops had stepped in, saying that he wanted to see a man who might possibly be there, but he had returned almost immediately, with the remark that his friend was not in the place. Now on coming to the place, he said:

"You are quite tired out, my dear fellow; this tramp has been too much for you. Let us go down here and rest half an hour or so—long enough anyway to get a free supper. I don't know who pays for these suppers, but I know they are free to anyone who calls—especially all *my* friends," he added, with a gay, reassuring laugh.

Alston was too weary to reason or even think, and the many new and strange sights he had seen had dazed and bewildered his brain.

"Do they give free suppers here?" he asked.

"Certainly. Every evening, and no questions asked. Free to any one who comes properly introduced, you know. Bill of fare equal to Delmonico's—all the delicacies of the season—quail on toast, spring chickens—whatever you like to ask."

"And nothing to pay?"

“Not for those who come in with gentlemen who like myself have the *entrée*.”

Again that warning voice, thrice given, came. They were on the steps halfway down, when that voice seemed to say: “These steps lead down to hell.”

Alston did not despise that warning, but he could not see clearly where the danger lay—indeed his power to see clearly at all, was fast forsaking him. That a strange man had become greatly interested in him, had been showing him through the city, and had taken him to a place where he could get a splendid supper without charge, would be an agreeable incident to remember and relate to his friends.

He moved on and down, held and led by the strange fascination, the subtle influence of the tempter, who was nothing more nor less than a “steerer” for this gambling den, called sometimes in slang phrase, a “roper in.” The hotel where he had encountered Alston was one of his occasional stopping-places, where, like a beast of prey, he laid in ambush and watched for his victims. He had been cognizant of every movement the young man made after arriving at the hotel, and had heard every word he spoke. He knew that the roll of money was not put in the safe as it should have been, but kept in the young man’s pocket, and he was determined to have it, or at least his share of it, which in a case like this, where he did the most important part of the work, would not be less than twenty per cent.; and for that he had stipulated and agreed at the time when he first stepped into the saloon for a moment.

The victim was now in the saloon, and the job was nearly done. The remainder of the work would be easy.

Young Alston was gazing with wonder and admira-

tion at the highly polished chandeliers, mirrors, and other elegant articles with which the saloon was furnished and decorated, far beyond anything he had ever before seen in that line.

"Your orders, gentlemen," said a waiter, as he placed a *menu*, very handsomely engraved and decorated, before Alston and his companion.

The young man looked at his friend, who, seeing and in fact anticipating his embarrassment, observed:

"Your best way will be to duplicate my orders. Follow me, and you will come out all right."

He gave the orders—"same for both," every time, and drinks in the same way; but as he might need a clear head for the work he had in hand, another inside order was given, in regard to the liquors to be furnished to him.

It was nearly 11 o'clock when the poor victim whom the "steerer" had not even yet begun to get through with, rose from the table and attempted to move toward the door, saying, or at least trying to say:

"I must go, Mr. Jallops, whether you do or not. I must return to the hotel, put this money in the safe, and then go to my room."

"You will do nothing of the sort," said his destroyer, throwing an arm around the young man. "The best of the sport is yet to come. We must see the fight with the tiger"—rising and moving with his arm still around the poor fellow, toward the large double doors that opened into the gambling section.

Again that warning voice tried to reach him and arrest his steps; but it was too late. The next moment he was gazing with bewilderment down the long room, fitted out with the utmost luxuriousness of upholstery, painting and other ornamentation, and containing long tables heaped with dice, cards, and piles of specie and

notes, and surrounded by groups of eager faces. Just inside the door the steerer whispered three words "I've got him," to a man who was watching them with much interest. Then the door closed behind the angler and his prey.

The steerer then drew his victim to a small side table, and ordered more wine. The young man had barely strength enough left to say that he could not drink any more, and would like to go to his hotel at once.

"Nonsense," said Jallops. "See what a throw that fellow has just made," as a man near them, with a howl of exultation, threw down a card and drew a pile of money toward him. "Suppose we try our luck? I never gamble, but I am willing to lose five dollars to pay for the good supper and liquor we have had."

"I have no money with me of my own," remonstrated Alston in a hoarse, feeble voice. "And I dare not touch what is not mine. I'd better be going."

"Going? Why you've only begun to see life; I'll start the play—it shan't cost you a cent," he added, urging his victim forward to the table, "and give you half what we make if we win, while if we lose I'll stand the whole damage. Shall it be cards or dice?"

The stake was set. Jallops threw down the five dollars, and the dice were thrust into the hands of the victim. Of course the throw won, and twenty dollars was handed to Alston as his share of what had been won without any risk on his part.

At the first touch of the ill-gotten money the gambling demon seemed to take possession of him. Throw after throw was made, the average results being in favor of Alston; when in response to a sign from the "steerer" the young man was challenged to a stake double the amount he had gained. There was a mo-

ment's hesitation; then his trembling hand drew out his roll of bills, and the required sum was laid down. A short, breathless suspense followed—a few shuffles to the cards, a throw of the loaded dice in the gambler's hands—and the stakes were lost!

A look of livid despair blanched the face of the unhappy victim—a look of malignant triumph lit up the evil features of the “steerer.” Then more liquor was called for, and the now thoroughly defenceless man drank a little from a glass that was handed him. He was conscious that his strength was giving out, and that he needed the stimulant. He then managed to murmur huskily that he would go now, at the same time buttoning up his coat, as if to protect and save what money he had left.

“Go now?” said the human beast who held him in his merciless grasp, “surely not.”

For a few seconds Alston made no reply, but stood like one in the combined grasp of two equally opposing forces. Conscience, manhood, honor, every better sentiment of his nature, were making a last desperate effort to come to his rescue. Seven hundred dollars of his employer's money was already gone. The most of it yet remained—should he risk and perhaps lose that also?

The last despairing appeal of violated conscience implored him to stop right there, while he might yet retrace his misguided steps, and retrieve in some measure his fallen honor. But the voice was drowned and lost, by the suggestion whispered in his ear by the insinuating voice of his tempter:

“Come, my good fellow! I have taken you in hand, and cannot let you leave here until you have won back what you have lost. The next throw will set you on your feet again and give you as much more.”

The hapless victim did try again, mad with excitement, until, with occasional fluctuations of success, he had been bled to utter destitution; until with flushed, yet haggard cheeks, and wild, despairing eyes he stood before his despoilers, bankrupt—money, honor, character, all gone—swept into the mad, merciless vortex of irreparable ruin.

A little later, poor Alston, weak, reeling and only half-conscious, was guided up the steps by two men, assisted as far as the second corner, and there left to take the car that came rattling along. Stepping on board, he sank upon the seat. Soon the conductor passing through, tapped his shoulder; he felt in his vest pocket, but not even a penny was there. Then as by magic, the fatal mist cleared, revealing the utter poverty and wretchedness of his condition; and with one wild cry he buried his face in his hands and sobbed aloud.

A passenger, a shrewd but kind man, spoke to him, paid his fare, and having heard the substance of his sad story, accompanied him to his hotel and left him there, promising to call the next day, and make further inquiries in regard to his case.

Between 1 and 2 o'clock that night, Samuel Jones, having laid aside his name of "Jallops" and likewise the glittering attire that he had worn in support of that character, reeled home in a state of hilarious intoxication, and with a push of his foot aroused his wife, who had fallen asleep on the floor beside her child's bed, at the same time tossing a roll of bills into her lap.

"Smeli o' that, will you? and don't say I never bring home anything," he hiccupped.

"This is the price of the life-blood and honor of some

poor wretch," said Arabella, "whom you have driven to despair—perhaps to suicide."

But with a curse she was admonished that it was none of her business; and raising a menacing fist to emphasize his injunction Jones added:

"If you want it, take it without any of your d—d insinuations. If you don't want it, I'll take it back."

"I'll keep it," replied Arabella, knowing that what remained in his hands would soon be dissipated in drunken orgies with his companions in crime.

And so the frail bark of another life full of promise lay a shattered wreck upon the deadly reef of temptation and sin, while the man who had wrought his ruin continued his nefarious work for awhile unchecked. But an unrelenting Nemesis was on his path, and soon to overtake him. Those who destroy others are themselves destroyed at last; their doom is inevitable.

CHAPTER XXIX.

AURI SACRA FAMES.

“The love of gold, that meanest rage,
And latest folly of man’s sinking age,
Which, rarely venturing in the van of life,
While nobler passions wage their heated strife,
Comes skulking last with selfishness and fear,
And dies collecting lumber in the rear.”

—Moore.

IN the inner office of Nicodemus Grimshaw’s flourishing establishment, two persons were seated—the merchant himself and his spiritual adviser, the Rev. Timothy Simpcox, who had entered but a few minutes before to have a talk with his senior warden.

“I am glad to see you in such good health, Mr. Grimshaw,” he had remarked.

“Yes, sir. I am happy to say I enjoy a fair portion of Heaven’s greatest blessing,” sighed the merchant. “But it troubles me to see that sin does so continue to abound in the world. We dispense our charities far and wide in the hope of doing good, and it seems like throwing away money and time. Wickedness still stalks abroad, and vice reigns triumphant.”

“Not so, not so, my dear brother,” interposed the rector. “In good time we shall reap our reward. Thousands are now being converted in heathen Africa; but yet I am sorry to tell you that a missionary writing from Zanzibar, sends the startling information that the emissaries of the Pope are making in that vicinity

almost superhuman efforts to proselyte the natives. Shall this be permitted, Mr. Grimshaw, when a little money is all that is needed to take that work into our hands, and carry it successfully forward?"

The rector paused and regarded his senior warden intently; and Grimshaw's hand had fallen mechanically upon his pocket, when the door opened and a clerk announced:

"A lady to see Mr. Grimshaw."

"A lady?" echoed the merchant; and at the same instant a graceful figure stepped past the clerk and stood before him.

"Mr. Grimshaw, I presume?" said the visitor in a quiet and perfectly self-possessed tone.

"Yes, madam, at your service," said the merchant, rising and bowing.

"May I have a few moments' conversation with you, sir?"

"Certainly, madam. Beg pardon—I cannot recall your name."

"Mademoiselle Roletta," replied the visitor.

"Ah," Mr. Grimshaw's face was quite beaming. "Pray be seated. I am happy to meet the lady whose name is so well and so favorably known."

Dr. Simpcox had risen to withdraw, remarking that he would call in again; but hearing the name, he turned quickly, and regarded the graceful young lady, surrounded for once by the accessories of fashionable and becoming attire, with admiring eyes.

"Excuse me, but you will, I hope, allow me likewise to express the pleasure I feel in being permitted to speak with the songstress whose notes of melody are making for her an enduring fame. I am the Rev. Dr. Simpcox," and he extended his hand in a cordial greeting.

He did not add and probably would not have been disposed to do so, on that occasion, while willing thus to give his clerical indorsement to the successful and popular living songstress, that he was the man who had turned the dead clown, as he had termed him, from his church door. He did not need to add that fact, moreover, for it was very well remembered, and the hand so graciously and cordially taken, returned only a very slight pressure. There came to Rolina's mind a vivid recollection of the former occasions on which she had met these men now doing her so much deference and respect. She remembered that stormy night at the depot—the brown stone porch of that fashionable church—the crowded courtroom. These pictures seemed as if they were indelibly stamped upon the features of the two men, neither of whom imagined for a moment that the bright, stylish girl, just budding into womanhood, and bearing about her an air of conscious refinement and grace, was the one upon whom, scarcely two years before, when friendless, in want, and in meager attire, both had sat in pitiless judgment. While sitting there in the office of the man whose avarice and tyranny would have consigned her to hopeless destitution and disgrace, it was scarcely possible to realize the altered circumstances which a merciful Providence had permitted to be the reward of resolute and unfaltering perseverance, and faithful devotion to duty and truth.

"I have called, Mr. Grimshaw," said Rolina, proceeding immediately to business, as Dr. Simpcox left the office, "to make some inquiries in regard to a house and lot in Blissburgh, which, if practicable, I wish to purchase for an aged couple in whom I am interested. I understand it is on the market, or soon will be."

"Ah, yes, certainly, Miss Roletta. I will give you any information you desire in regard to the property,

and if you wish to purchase, I can put you in possession of a perfect title within a few weeks."

"I understand there is some incumbrance on the property," said our heroine.

"Well, yes; an overdue mortgage and some interest. Then there are taxes, assessments, and other little matters. Everything will be made right, and the title will be perfect; I give you my own guarantee, and there is none better."

"How much do you consider the property worth?"

"Five thousand dollars would be very low for it. But if you choose to vary your question a little, my dear young lady, and ask how much I will sell it to you for, you may receive another and much more favorable answer. I understand your interest in this matter is prompted by a charitable desire to provide an aged couple with a home—a most generous and laudable purpose, which you have reason to be thankful that God in His merciful providence has given you the ability to perform. The property, as I said is cheap, at five thousand dollars. The mortgage, interest, taxes, and other incumbrances amount to over seven hundred dollars additional; but I will clear off everything and give you the place for four thousand dollars."

"And how soon will you be ready, Mr. Grimshaw, to give me the title?"

"As soon as the foreclosure is completed, and the sale confirmed—say forty days at the furthest. I could have had the title before now, but I make it a rule to be not only just but liberal in all my business transactions—too liberal, I fear, sometimes. I directed my lawyer to give the mortgagor—a slow and easy old man—a stay of three months in which to raise the money or even a part of it; but he has done nothing so far. He has a son, a thriftless fellow—a sort of second-

class actor, who is always going to do something wonderful, but never comes to time. Sympathy and indulgence are always wasted on such people. I hope the aged couple for whom you propose to purchase the property are deserving of your benevolence."

"I think so," said Rolina quietly. "I know them well."

"And by the way, mademoiselle, have you seen the property?"

"It has been carefully described to me by reliable parties, and I think four thousand dollars a fair price for it."

"Very good." Mr. Grimshaw rubbed his hands together in a state of high satisfaction. "I will be prepared to give you the title in forty days—or say fifty, to make everything sure. I will instruct my attorney to hurry forward the foreclosure proceedings, and bid in the property for me, so that your title may be perfect. Come in, doctor," he added, as the rector at that moment returned, intent upon securing that missionary subscription as early as possible. "No intrusion. We fully understand each other in regard to that matter, I believe, Miss Roletta?"

"I understand everything clearly, Mr. Grimshaw," was her cautious reply.

"Pardon me, Miss Roletta," interposed Dr. Simpcox as she was about to rise. "But may I ask if you have heard of the wonderful progress made by our missionaries in heathen Africa?"

Rolina was not an angel, and the reader will please not mistake her for one. She had with difficulty been restraining and smothering her indignation at the outrageous injustice that Grimshaw had been planning to inflict upon old Mr. McCready; and this remark was just one straw more than she could support with equanimity.

"I am not giving myself any special concern, doctor, just at present, about the heathen in Africa," she replied with emphasis. "There are, I think, some men right here in New York, who, although paying out their money for the benefit of the heathen in Africa, are in much greater need of religious instruction and its attendant spiritual benefits than the people to whom their money is presumed to go."

If a hand-grenade had exploded at their feet at that instant, the two men could not have been more startled. But quite oblivious of the sensation she had created, Rolina went on:

"Mr. Grimshaw I saw your daughter—your only child—a few weeks ago; she and her child, *your* grandchild—starving. Your own once petted and caressed daughter in miserable degradation, grieving and yearning to see you and obtain your forgiveness. One-tenth part of the money you lavish in *speculative* charity, would rescue your daughter and her child from the state of worse than heathen darkness and misery in which they live, and give them a comfortable home, outside of your own home, if there is no room or place there in which you will consent to receive them."

"Miss Roletta, that is a subject that I cannot allow to be discussed in my presence," said Grimshaw brusquely. "I have no daughter. She has been dead to me from the time when, disobeying my authority and leaving my home, she went off with a vagabond—a scoundrel."

"Let him that is without sin cast the first stone. Forgive, and ye shall be forgiven," fell from the lips of that slender girl, like a voice from heaven. But the impression was only momentary.

"We will dismiss this subject, if you please, young lady," said Mr. Grimshaw more firmly. "Much ex-

perience and observation has taught me that the course I am pursuing with the unfortunate woman I once called my daughter is just and right, and I do not permit any one to question my conduct in regard to that matter. My money is expended to promote virtue, not to furnish a premium upon disobedience and willful disgrace. I wish you good-day."

"Good-day, sir," replied Rolina, rising, and at the same time handing him a card on which she had pencilled the street and number at which his daughter could be found.

"Allow me a word, young lady," persisted Dr. Simpcox, as Rolina was moving toward the door. "I as the spiritual adviser of my friend, Mr. Grimshaw, am familiar with the whole history of that unfortunate case. His course is perfectly proper and justifiable. The discipline of suffering as is universally admitted is a mercy to transgressors. I am sorry, however, that you place so light an estimate upon the missionary cause——"

"Good-day, gentlemen!" said Rolina again, and withdrew.

"A precious pair!" she exclaimed, as she walked homeward. "And is it any wonder that one so imbued with chicanery and deceit, should be suffering the consequences of his daughter's inherited evils? To think that he would so deliberately undertake to defraud those old people out of that property; but he will miss it for once. My benefit comes off next week, and I can then pay what is due on the mortgage, and that is all he will get," and she walked onward more rapidly, her radiant face and sparkling eyes causing many a passer-by to glance around for a second look at the attractive sight.

Dr. Simpcox, observing Mr. Grimshaw's dis-

turbed state of mind, withdrew also soon after Rolina's departure, but without saying anything more, just then, in regard to the heathen in Africa.

Being thus left alone, Grimshaw sat for a long time without moving. Our heroine's fearless yet pathetic appeal had awakened in the miser's breast thoughts of that long ago, ere the demon of greed had obtained entire possession of his soul. Memory brought back the happy hours spent by his cheerful fireside, with his little Bella playing around him. Then his thoughts ran on through the intervening years, when with paternal pride he had watched her develop into womanhood. He saw her at the *fête*, flushed, radiant and joyous—then her deception, disobedience and flight—and now with her hapless child, dragging out a miserable existence among squalor and degradation.

“Bella, my daughter, come home and bring your child. I am lonely in my old age. All is forgiven.
“Your FATHER.”

He actually traced these words, enveloped and directed the note, and then took up and began to count some bills lying before him, and on which a paper weight had been placed. As he did so, the expression of pity and forgiveness faded from his face; the spirit of avarice, an implacable resentment returned, and every gentler emotion was stifled and dissipated.

The note was permitted to lie there until the money had been counted and placed in the safe; then it was torn into fragments, and thrown into the waste basket.

“She made her own bed and she must lie on it. My money shall not go to one who has deliberately disgraced me. If she starves, it is her own fault; she should have considered the consequences.”

The accursed thirst for gold had conquered and ex-

tinguished the last emotion of paternal affection. That better angel who tried to draw near to him at the eleventh hour, had been driven away. His child must go on, sinking deeper and deeper into misery, sorrow and want, forsaken and unwept, while he must live on in his old age, unloved, uncared for, with no friend but gold.

And while he sat there, hardening his heart to every impulse of pity or forgiveness, the wretched object upon whom his thoughts had been for that brief time dwelling, sat crouched upon a rickety chair before the expiring embers of a handful of fire, with a tattered shawl around her shoulders, rocking to and fro in the vain endeavor to soothe the wailing infant in her lap. A pitiful object it was, little more than a year old, but bearing already on its pinched and sharpened features that look of premature oldness, the invariable stamp of poverty's children. The cheeks were pale and sunken, the lips parched and colorless, while the eyes that roved restlessly about the room, turning piteously at intervals upon the mother's face, were unnaturally large and brilliant.

For some time Arabella sat gazing upon her babe in silence; then drawing it closer, she kissed it with an impulse of maternal tenderness.

"Poor little darling," she murmured softly, while at the sound of her voice the child hushed its wailing sobs for a moment. "How I wish you had never been born. Nothing but pain, poverty and suffering now, and greater miseries in store for you every day that you live."

It was hard to realize that so short a time had elapsed since she was a happy, care-free girl; the broken-down, prematurely old woman, who crouched there seemed twenty years older than the radiant girl who could date

the turning point of her life from that ill-fated birthday entertainment. Well might she have said with Byron:

“ Think’st thou existence doth depend on time?
It doth; but actions are our epochs; mine
Have made my days and nights imperishable,
Endless and all alike, as sands on the shore,
Innumerable atoms, and one desert,
Barren and cold, on which the wild waves break,
But nothing rests save carcasses and wrecks,
Rocks and the salt surf weeds of bitterness!”

Nearly three months had elapsed since her first meeting with Rolina, who had made her several subsequent visits, despite her removal to another and still more degraded locality.

Her babe, that seemed at the point of death when our heroine first saw it, rallied, and was lingering on, an emaciated wreck, yet holding to life with a rare tenacity, by virtue of a latent vitality inherited from its unhappy mother. With some of the money her husband had given her on the night of poor Alston’s ruin, Arabella had purchased a few articles of furniture, which in his drunken frenzies Jones had soon demolished, and reduced to their present dilapidated condition.

Arabella had permitted the child to fall back in her lap and indifferent to its cries for attention and care was gazing gloomily before her, when the sound of heavy, uneven, but well-known steps upon the stairs caused an instinctive shudder, and she hastily drew her shawl more closely around the child, as if to protect it from approaching danger. The next moment an unsteady hand was laid upon the door—it opened, and her half-drunken husband with bloated face and bloodshot eyes, staggered into the room. Degraded as she had become, Arabella’s heart sank within her, as she thought of the shame and wretchedness to which

this man had reduced her, and contrasted it with the luxurious home she had once had.

Approaching his wife, Jones laid a heavy hand upon her shoulder, disturbing the shawl so as to disclose the child in her lap.

"Why do you waste your time nursing that sickly brat?" he demanded with an oath. "I wish it was dead."

"So do I," said Arabella bitterly. "For once we are agreed. If ever I have a happy hour again, it will be when I see that poor babe in its coffin. Sooner than live to see her suffer as I do, from the brutality of a depraved, drunken sot, I would end her existence with my own hand."

"Take care what you say, woman," exclaimed Jones, threateningly. "You chose your own fate, and must abide by it. Blame yourself, not me."

"Myself," repeated Arabella. "How dare you say that to me? You who flattered me and professed the most devoted love until I had no will of my own—you miscreant deceiver. You, who beguiled me from my home, and when the money I had stolen from my father was spent, and I was stripped of jewels, raiment and everything, even to the ring that your false hand had put upon my finger, and when there was no longer any possibility of reconciliation with my father, then disclosed your black hearted and utter depravity, showing me the depth of degradation into which I must sink, because chained to a devil. All this you have done, Samuel Jones, while I have been a helpless victim in your hands. On you rests the blame and guilt of my downfall and ruin."

The gambler regarded her with folded arms and the look of a fiend, a cruel sneer curling his lips.

"I was not at all anxious, my dear, to remove *you*

from your father's roof; in fact, I now look upon it as the most egregious act of folly I ever committed; not very flattering to your vanity, I'll admit, but truth, nevertheless. If on that eventful night you had simply passed your money and other valuables to me, through the window, I would have been entirely satisfied. As for your precious self, you might have kept that in your room. You might have lived there in peace to this day and gone at last to heaven in a hand-basket, for all that I would have cared. But when a woman makes up her mind to do a thing, the best and wisest way is to let her do it," and Jones ended his dastardly speech with a loud, brutal laugh.

Arabella rose and faced the base creature, her eyes flashing fire.

"You despicable wretch. Must you add insult to injury, after having violated every promise you made me on that thrice-cursed night when I left a home of comfort and luxury? Would to God the grave had covered me before I ever looked upon your face," and she sank back, the brief fit of passion spent, in a paroxysm of hysterical weeping.

A moment's silence ensued, which the gambler improved by lighting a cigar.

"Why don't you get a divorce?" he said. "I would have advised you to do so a long time ago, only that I have been able to turn you to account occasionally, in a financial way, with the help of your good looks, of which you have only a small stock remaining. And by the way, my dear, I have a bit of good news to tell you, when you get over your tantrum—the prospect of another situation for you, where you can turn a pretty penny. You may as well help along a little, so long as I have to support you, and not sit at home all day, playing fine lady, with nothing to support the character."

Arabella checked her sobs, and without heeding the last brutal words, asked :

“What is the situation, and where?”

“Ah, catching a woman napping when there is a dollar to rake in,” retorted Jones, with an irritating laugh. “You are wanted to play the piano and sing, evenings, at a place near the Bowery. The proprietor says he would like to see you, so if you have any decent substitute for that ragged gown you are sporting just now, on with it, and let us be going, before some one else gets in ahead of us.”

Against cruel and relentless necessity it is hard to contend. What could the poor woman do better than to go with the wretched man and see what sort of a place he had found. It is almost impossible for a woman to avoid sharing in the guilt of a depraved husband. From his misery and degradation she has no way of escape so long as she remains with him, subject to his authority and influence.

Arabella laid her child, which had sunk to sleep, in its squalid bed, and pulling out a trunk which contained a few remnants of what had once constituted a very choice and elegant wardrobe, which she had retained despite the vicissitudes of abject poverty, she proceeded to make as presentable a toilet as possible, and they then started for the proposed place, leaving the little one to fare as best it might in their absence.

The poor woman soon found herself in a second-rate saloon of gaudy appearance and doubtful character. Low as she had been brought by constant association with her imbruted partner, and the stern necessities of extreme poverty, she involuntarily shrank from entering this abode of vice, to which she would be expected to resort every evening, and do her part toward luring into its deadly meshes the ignorant and unsuspecting.

This last protest of womanly sensitiveness was observed by her husband, and rewarded by a rough shake, as he conducted, or rather forced, her down the steps, and into the presence of the proprietor of the establishment.

"I guess you'll do," was the verdict, after Arabella had displayed her skill in playing and singing. "Keep up a good appearance, and look smart and knowing—they's the kind that draws—and you'll pass very well. I'll give you good wages, so that you can keep up with the fashions, and have all the new songs as they come out."

"See here," said Jones, as they were on their way homeward, speaking in the savage tone with which he now habitually addressed his enslaved partner, "I know more about women than that fellow"—with a backward jerk of his thumb toward the saloon. "It won't take a fortune for clothes; and the finery you have there in that old trunk is most as good as new, and good enough for that place."

"And what of that?" said Arabella, as he stopped.

"Just this, my larkey—and I want you to heed what I tell you. I'm to have half of that money."

"I dare say," retorted Arabella bitterly. "It won't be long before you demand it all. That is what it always comes to. Even this degraded position I won't be able to retain but a few weeks."

Their home was near by, and was soon reached. Out of a five-dollar bill received from the saloon-keeper as an advance on his wife's salary, Jones procured the materials for an abundant supper—three bottles of London porter included—and when the meal was disposed of, threw himself at full length upon the cot, while Arabella sank down on the floor by the side of her sleeping child.

No gleam of maternal tenderness shone in her eye as

she gazed upon the infant, for the time calm and peaceful; but as she leaned her weary and aching head upon the side of the cradle, and clasped her hands in the very ecstasy of despair and utter, helpless hopelessness, she felt that she had that day let go of the last remnant of womanly delicacy. She must from that time henceforth drift further and further away from every sentiment of purity and refinement, down the dark vista of hopeless, irredeemable degradation.

Little did Nicodemus Grimshaw think that the accomplishments for which his money had been so freely lavished in former days, when his pride in his only child was stronger even than his love of gold, would eventually be turned to such an account as this; and could he have seen his once cherished and only daughter and child, night after night, decked out in flashy attire, playing and singing the current songs of the period, in that vile place, in intimate association with depraved and dissolute characters, he might have felt and realized, as he never could otherwise, that the cup of anguish he had many years before pressed to another's lips, had returned to his own, full to overflowing.

CHAPTER XXX.

A PARENTAL COMMAND.

“My soul aches
To know, when two authorities are up,
Neither supreme, how soon confusion
May enter 'twixt the gap of both, and take
The one by the other.”

—*Shakespeare.*

BESSIE ORMSBY sat in her dressing room, with her head resting on one slender hand, and her eyes fixed upon the richly-patterned carpet at her feet. But she was not noticing or thinking of its many colors. The expression of her face indicated clearly that the subject that held and enchained her thoughts filled her with pain and distress.

There was a knock at the door, and without raising her head Bessie answered “Come in,” and in another moment her mother stood beside her chair.

“What is the matter with you, Bessie? Are you ill?” Mrs. Ormsby asked, regarding her daughter with a momentary qualm of anxious misgiving.

The effort to speak even choked Bessie’s voice, and dimmed her eyes with tears.

“No, mother. I feel about—about as usual.”

“I do wish, Bessie, you would drop that melo-dramatic accent,” said Mrs. Ormsby with an impatient tap of her slippered foot. “It may be well enough when you want to get up a scene, but at home it becomes insufferably tiresome; look up now, and try to

act as if you were alive, for a few moments, at least. I have something interesting to tell you."

"Of course you have been aware," Mrs. Ormsby continued, drawing up a chair and seating herself, as Bessie partly raised her head, "of the pointed and significant character of Lord Gordon's attentions. His lordship called upon me yesterday forenoon, to ask my permission to address you, and he is to call this afternoon to see you in person."

"And I am expected to answer him?" she could not finish the sentence.

"Affirmatively, of course—no girl in her senses would for a moment think of doing otherwise. A titled connection with estates in three countries, and a rank among the peerage. Just think of it, Bessie. The heart of any other young lady in the city would rebound at the prospect of an alliance like the one you treat with such indifference."

A spot of red crept to Bessie's pale cheeks, which only made the surrounding pallor more noticeable.

"Mother, would you counsel me—would you think it right for me to give my hand to a man for whom I have not the very least sentiment of affection?" she asked.

"Affection! nonsense! That's very well for milkmaids and cowboys to talk about; but in these practical wide-awake times, and here in the city of New York, there is no time or room for any such sentiments. Your position in life is the important thing to consider and secure; everything else will regulate itself satisfactorily once that is attained."

"Mother," said Bessie firmly, "I am a member of the church, and my prayer-book as well as my Bible tells me that marriage is a Divine institution, a hallowed rite. Can I stand at God's altar with the solemn

vow on my lips to 'love honor, and obey' a man from whom every impulse of my nature turns not only with indifference and utter lack of interest, but with active and actual abhorrence?"

"Bessie, that is mere childish squeamishness," said her mother impatiently. "Of course a little reserve and maidenly reluctance is eminently proper at such a time; but there is no need to carry it to such fanciful extremes. As for the 'love and obey' feature, that is a mere form, of course. There must be a ceremony of some sort and a ceremony necessarily involves a stipulated form of words; but once gone through it is done with and that's the end of it. Every one understands just what it really means."

"The end of it," Bessie repeated. "Yes, indeed, and too often the end of all peace and happiness. Do not ask me, mother, to stand up before the altar where I have knelt in worship that I have at least tried to make sincere, and utter what under such circumstances as these would be a deliberate and impious falsehood."

"Bessie, you put me out of all patience," exclaimed Mrs. Ormsby with an angry flush. "I know from whom you have got these ultra notions—from that would-be pink of propriety, whom I heartily wish we had never seen, and who knew how to play a part as well as any one else, when it suited her interests to do so, with her pretensions to wealth and social standing which she never had or could have. She is the one who has filled your head with all this sentimental twaddle about 'principle,' and 'affinity,' as she calls it. I have marked the pernicious effect of her influence upon you ever since you first met her. As for this alliance with Lord Gordon; it is an opportunity that does not occur once in a lifetime—no nor a dozen lifetimes. His lordship has assured me of his entire devo-

tion to you, and I will not permit you to lose this golden opportunity through the meddlesome influence of an officious, ignorant and conceited little nobody like Mrs. Glenn."

Bessie's pale lips curled.

"If I were sure of receiving one-half the devotion Lord Gordon entertains for his whiskers, I would feel flattered. I do not believe that man capable of a sincere affection for any one. And, mother, I beg you not to speak in that way of dear Mrs. Glenn. I believe her to be a thoroughly honest, sincere, and genuine woman, incapable of departing even in thought from the path of true rectitude. But I am young, and do not see any reason why I should marry at all, just at present. Are you in a hurry to be rid of your only daughter?"

The girl's fair, delicate face flushed; her wistful violet eyes filled with tears, and her mother's heart was really touched for a moment.

"Of course not, Bessie. You know I never could consent to parting with my only child forever. You will take your wedding tour abroad, as a matter of course; but Lord Gordon has promised me that he will spend every alternate year in America, and probably somewhere in New York State; he will purchase and maintain a residence here for that purpose; so after all it will be only a nominal separation; and you will have the gratification of knowing that you can lead society on both sides of the water, both by virtue of your beauty and your titled connection. Lord Gordon tells me the family stands second to none in the peerage."

A moment's silence ensued. Mrs. Ormsby's rapid, confident utterances fell on her daughter's heart like clods on a coffin. At length looking up again, Bessie said:

"Mother, to me there is a counterfeit ring in every word that man utters. How do we know that he has estates in England or anywhere else, or belongs to the peerage at all? He may, for all we know, be nothing more than a knave, imposing upon us title-loving, caste-worshipping, credulous Americans."

"How do we know?" echoed Mrs. Ormsby. "Why I am sure his manners and accent furnish proof enough. Besides, the large revenue necessary to maintain his style of living shows that his representations in regard to himself are—*must be* genuine. Your pretended suspicions are utterly without foundation, Bessie, depend upon it. Lord Gordon is just what he claims to be; and as you cannot offer any valid reason for refusing him, you may as well succumb gracefully."

Again Bessie's fair face, so full of pain and weariness, drooped and rested upon her hand, while tears that would not be longer repressed, trickled down her cheeks.

"Well, mother, even granting that my suspicions—which have been growing stronger of late—are incorrect, it makes very little difference as to the main point at issue. I do not love this man. I cannot yield him any sentiment of confidence or respect; and how can I think of marrying a man whom I cannot regard other than with aversion? You who have been so blessed in the marriage relation surely would not consign me to a fate so pitiless—so cruel. Can it be possible that you would not only desire but urge me to marry a man whose presence I can scarcely tolerate? I know that father would not," and again the tears rolled down her pale cheeks.

Mrs. Ormsby's face had altered strangely as her daughter's last words were spoken. A sudden flush was succeeded by a sudden pallor; and when she spoke again it was with evident effort.

"Have you spoken to your father about this matter, Bessie?"

"No, mother, not yet. The whole subject has been so utterly distasteful to me that I could not bring myself to discuss it even speculatively. But if you will wait until father returns home, and then lay the subject before him, I will be content to abide his decision."

Mrs. Ormsby made a gesture of petulant annoyance.

"You know, Bessie, that your father has peculiar notions about such matters—about everything, in fact—and that we very rarely agree on any essential point, especially such as pertain to society, against which he seems to have imbibed a most unaccountable prejudice. His consent or disapproval would depend upon the mood he happened to be in at the moment the matter was presented to him, and not at all upon the merits of the case. The best way is not to bother him about it."

"Mother," said Bessie, with more spirit and determination than she had manifested as yet, "of one thing I am fully assured, that my father loves me, and that his counsels in everything that affected me, would be directed to the advancement of my best welfare. So I can say with all confidence, and in spite of my own personal feelings or prejudices, that if he shows me that this step is right or best, I will submit without any further opposition."

"If! that sounds very docile and filial. Any one would think you were going to be martyred, to hear you. You know all the time, however, that you can make your father see through your eyes, and in that way contrive to have your own way after all. The mother always has the balance of power and discretion in matters of this sort. When *I* received an offer, second only to the one with which you are favored, I did not need to be admonished by, or even to consult

either of my parents. I was sensible enough to see my opportunity and embrace it. But you are very different in disposition; you need a mother to advise you, and you fortunately have one who knows just how to do so, and who will not permit you to ruin your prospects for life by following the silly sentimentalism of a person who looks and acts more like a dairymaid than a lady."

"Mother, Mrs. Glenn has been brought up in an atmosphere of innocence and purity. Her counsels are full of love and wisdom," answered Bessie gravely.

"Well," said Mrs. Ormsby, reinforced by a sudden inspiration, "since you set her up for an oracle, follow her example; be true to your early education and training, as she has been to hers. Children are commanded in the Scripture to obey their parents, and as you are a church member *that* ought to have some weight with you."

"Yes, mother—'*in the Lord*,'" said Bessie, raising her serious eyes. "Can I be sure that *that* requirement is included in this case? Besides, the word is 'parents' not 'parent.' Am I bound by the arbitrary command of *one* parent to an act against which my conscience firmly rebels, while the *other* parent is not even consulted?"

"That is simply quibbling, Bessie," said her mother. "A child cannot obey both parents, except in matters where both are agreed. This is a matter that I know all about, and I am the one who has the right to require your obedience. Your father will no doubt agree with me in the end; but we cannot incur any risks in that direction now. As for the *moral* obligation, you ought to have enough regard for your mother, who has reared you, and advanced your interests in every way, to let her decide this question for you. Suppose your

father should fail, and then suddenly die, and leave you entirely unprovided for—those things are happening every day—what would become of you then, do you suppose?”

“I would fill the most humble, honest position in life, and earn my bread by my daily toil, rather than bind myself to a loveless existence,” said Bessie with emotion. “I have no fear of my father leaving me entirely unprovided for; but even if anything of that sort should happen, I have a Father in heaven, who would provide some way for me to obtain what little I should need while I remained in this world. Anything whatever, mother, rather than marriage with a man from whom every instinct of my nature turns with absolute loathing.”

The girl’s fair cheek glowed for a moment, and her violet eyes grew luminous with the light that filled and overflowed them, until they ran over in tears.

“Self-love, after all,” said Mrs. Ormsby pettishly. “Your sole object is to please yourself, without regard to your mother’s feelings or wishes. Your talk may seem to you very pretty and poetical; but when your wardrobe comes down to one calico dress, and your supper is a cup of weak tea, a slice of bread, and two herrings, attended by the light of a tallow candle, your muse will fold her wings. ‘Honest poverty’ may look quite bearable as portrayed in ballads and novels, but it assumes a very different appearance when you realize that to be poor means to wear old and patched clothes, eat food that you would now scarcely give to a beggar, and be snubbed and shunned with contempt, as the poor are, and must be and ought to be by respectable people.”

“Better, then, *physical* want and arrogant contempt, with a clear, approving conscience, than worldly honor

and affluence, at the cost of conscience violated and womanhood dishonored, by a marriage with a man whom I can neither love nor respect," said Bessie, with a calmness more formidable, and more difficult to deal with than any amount of violent emotion would have been.

A silence fell between them for a moment, and then raising her head, Bessie spoke again.

"I cannot consent, mother, to entertain or consider any overtures of marriage from Lord Gordon until I have written to my father and received his reply. So much as this, my own sense of propriety demands; and to this deference and filial respect, he is certainly entitled. Let me have his address, and I will write to him at once, and state the facts of the case fairly. I have never even mentioned Lord Gordon's name to him except in the most casual way; for a consummation of this sort was something I could not bring myself to contemplate. Still, as I have said, if my father approves of the step, I will yield my personal prejudices to his wishes and yours."

Mrs. Ormsby leaned slightly forward, and fixed upon her daughter a look so intense that it sent a deathlike chill to her heart.

"Now, Bessie, I want you to listen to me," she said, arming for a last attack. "I have set my heart upon this alliance, and I *will* not be disappointed. For almost six months the eyes of our friends and acquaintances have been directed to you as the prospective Lady Gordon; and the thought of allowing your morbid sentimentalism to bring it to nothing, is more than I can endure. I would never be able to hold up my head in society again. His lordship would find no difficulty in being accepted by some of the many who would only too gladly have secured his attentions in the first place,

and whose relatives and friends would be sure to create and maintain the impression that he had jilted you—placing you before society in the mortifying position of a discarded sweetheart.

“Your father’s whereabouts at this time I do not know, exactly. He was to stay a week in Milwaukee, and then go still farther west, and it is impossible to tell when or where a letter would reach him. On the other hand, Lord Gordon tells me that he had just received a letter from his solicitor in England that there are matters connected with his estate that require his personal attention; and this question must be settled before he goes; and I would rather meet my death than witness a failure, after all that has passed between his lordship and me. The shame and mortification would send me to an early grave. Bessie,” Mrs. Ormsby’s voice quivered with repressed excitement, “you are bound, my child, by every tie of duty and affection, to comply with my wishes in this matter! Of course I cannot coerce you; but I give you your choice. Accept the offer of his lordship’s hand, this afternoon, and you have secured the love, gratitude and affection of a devoted mother to the end of your life. Refuse, and you alienate me from you forever, you commit an offense that I will never, *never* forgive! Are you prepared, my daughter, to live under the same roof, and sit at the same table with me, knowing that I am continually thinking of you as the one whose willful ingratitude and disobedience have shattered the brightest hopes of my life—one who has become only a blot upon my existence, and on whom my eye can never again fall with pride or affection? Are you prepared to accept this result for the gratification of a selfish caprice, and lose a titled connection, and a mother’s love and blessing, and have fastened upon your mind the consciousness that

you have embittered her existence and destroyed her happiness for life?"

Bessie's head had drooped yet lower, during this last pitiless speech, but as her mother finished she looked up, with an expression in her eyes that seemed like a funeral pall drawn over a last expiring hope. Looking eagerly into the pale, tortured face, Mrs. Ormsby saw that she had triumphed. With her sensitive, nervous temperament weakened by what had already transpired, this last alternative was the drop too much in the already brimming cup. She would have welcomed the stroke of death as a way of escape; but against a system of lingering, premeditated torture, such as those words depicted, she could not contend; and as she yielded, she felt and knew that her last feeble hold upon life had been snapped by a mother's hand.

"Very well, mother; I will oppose your wishes no longer. Let it be as you say," she said huskily. "When Lord Gordon calls to-day he shall receive a favorable answer."

"That is my own, dear, dutiful girl," said Mrs. Ormsby, rising from her hard-won battle, and pressing her lips to Bessie's cold brow. "You shall have a wedding that will make New York ring again; and I shall always remember you gratefully as having fulfilled my dearest desire! Now be dressed in time, and look your prettiest. I shall be out with the colonel all the afternoon." And she left the room, evidently glad to retire from the scene, while Bessie rose, half-staggered to a low sofa and sinking on her knees beside it, buried her face in the scented silken cushion.

A few minutes after 4 o'clock that afternoon, a ring at the doorbell fell on the heart of Bessie Ormsby like the knell of death. Then came a gentle knock at the door of her room, and her maid entered, bearing

Lord Gordon's card. She lingered as long as she could find any excuse to do so, while the maid arranged and rearranged her dress, finding her usually gentle young mistress uncommonly hard to please; and then when by no excuse could she extend the limit of her respite, Bessie went down to meet her visitor, pale as a veritable snow maiden, save where a small, hectic spot burned on either cheek. The interview was a short one; Bessie never could remember what was said on either side, beyond the first commonplace greeting; but at last she was alone again in the seclusion of her own apartments, gazing with a dazed, bewildered look upon the sparkling diamond that gleamed from its rich gold setting upon the slender index finger of her left hand.

CHAPTER XXXI.

A NEW ACQUAINTANCE.

“ Like the sweet melody that faintly lingers
Upon the wind-harp’s strings at close of day,
When gently touched by evening’s dewy fingers,
It breaths a low and melancholy lay,
So the calm voice of sympathy me seemeth;
And while its magic spell is round me cast,
My spirit in its cloistered silence dreameth,
And vaguely blends the future with the past.”

—Mrs. Fimbury.

ROLINA sat in her cozy room in her “mother’s” house, her bright, thoughtful face fixed upon a roll of bills in her lap. As the morning sunbeams glinting in at the window fell upon her sweet face, quiet and meditative, her hair, for the time unbound, falling in a bright shower over her neck and shoulders, she formed a very pretty and attractive picture.

Each year, while contributing its quota toward the perfect coronal of physical maturity, had also added to her store of mental wealth. The high, poetic nature and mental endowments of her parents had been transmitted in generous measure to their only and dearly loved child. Those native hereditary talents, had, it is true, been held in restraint as far as they could be, so long as she remained under the cast-iron discipline of Miss Sophia Pringle. It is proper, however, to say that Miss Pringle had her reasons, and to her they were good and sufficient ones, for the course she had pursued with

• her niece. In the first place, she wanted to get all the work she could out of her, and in the second place she thought it would not look well for the child to know more than her aunt did.

But from the first day of Rolina's entrance upon her new life among her friends—the first real friends she had ever known—the demands of her mental appetite began to be satisfied. Their limited library she eagerly devoured; and it afforded McCready a never-failing delight, whenever, by some auspicious stroke of fortune, he was enabled to add even one volume to his stock, a luxury that was indulged in about three times as often as it otherwise could have been, in consequence of the facilities afforded him by the second-hand book stores. Each book thus acquired, whether new or old, was a new elixir of life to Rolina. Most carefully was the soiled, battered, or partly-torn volume, that had been cast aside by some more highly favored, but less appreciative owner, treasured by the young student, until all its wealth and worth were made her own.

At other times, when their fortunes were at the lowest ebb, and a moderate supply of plain food was the only luxury they dared indulge in, McCready would sit down with his little *protégée*, and reproduce from the store of knowledge he had acquired while at college whatever he thought would be of most interest and benefit to her; and he was amply rewarded in observing the avidity, delight and ready appreciation with which she received and treasured his instructions.

One thing in which McCready took especial delight, because of the deep interest and satisfaction evinced by his pupil, was the study of elocution, and the portrayal of the different characters in the collection of standard dramas that he possessed. Of a warm, sympathetic nature, Rolina seemed especially fitted to assume and

enter into the impersonations required. In her eloquent eye and more eloquent voice, grave or gay, tender or tearful as the character required, McCready recognized the fire of true histrionic genius, which he believed was destined some day to bring the reward of honorable public recognition.

During the last year, while Rolina was in the receipt of a regular salary, a circulating library had opened to her its rich stores of knowledge; and every moment that could be spared from her rehearsals, necessary recreations, and the few domestic duties that she insisted upon discharging, "just to keep her hand in," was given to her beloved books, in the study of which she had begun to look into other languages beside her own. And this also led McCready to enter afresh, and with renewed interest, upon his own early studies, while giving her a helping hand now and then, during his hours of enforced leisure, when neither literature nor the drama seemed to hold out any encouragement for him.

"I mean to put the gifts with which God has blessed me to the very best use I can, Mr. McCready," Rolina said on one occasion, looking at her friend through those earnest eyes that had not lost entirely the wistful gaze which told of the sorrow that had clouded her earlier years. "And how can I do so any more effectually than by satisfying my cravings for every sort of useful knowledge that comes within my reach. I want to be a true woman—physically, mentally and spiritually. If I cannot attain to a high position in the social circles of this world, perhaps I may attain to and fill the mission of a truly useful life, while here, and in that way become prepared for those higher uses that will go forward to all eternity."

In this way the summer and fall had passed. Ro-

lina's success as a ballad singer had been, to quote the papers, "unprecedented," and on the morning after her benefit, which gave her the clear and full sum of five hundred dollars, Rolina came down to the parlor at 9:15, dressed to go out, and took her seat at the window, to be ready for the carriage that she had ordered to call for her.

"Mr. McCready wondered what made me so inquisitive the other evening, and why I asked so many questions about that mortgage," she said, with a bright smile at her own thoughts. "And why I insisted upon knowing how much was still due on it. I hope he did not suspect—" but her musing was cut short at that moment by the opening of the door and the entrance of Mrs. McCready.

"Where now, Rolina?" asked the good lady, with a look of surprise. But at that moment the carriage drew up, and the young nightingale was out and off in a twinkling, simply saying as she turned to kiss her "mother."

"I will be back within a couple of hours, and will try not to do any mischief while I am gone."

"What a strange girl," said Mrs. McCready, looking after her departing figure. "On some mission of charity I suppose. I hope she won't lose that five hundred dollars, nor use it all up."

Rolina's first call was made at the office of a well-known lawyer on William Street. Somebody had told her that a retaining fee was the first thing in order on entering a lawyer's office; and with that idea she took out and began to open her pocketbook before saying anything in regard to the nature of the business which had brought her there.

"Never mind your money, just now, young lady," said the lawyer, divining her intention. "Give me some idea of your business first, if you please."

Rolina complied, and in ten minutes had told him her story over three times, as every one does who knows little or nothing of such matters.

"That will do," said the lawyer, stopping her finally at a semicolon. "The case is quite plain. You have only to tender the balance due on the mortgage, which Mr. Grimshaw will no doubt accept. My partner, Mr. Edson, is a notary, and will go with you, and see that everything is properly done," he added, glancing at a young lawyer sitting at a desk a few feet away, and who had been listening with undisguised interest.

"Mr. Grimshaw's ways are apparently somewhat devious," said the elder lawyer to his partner. "From what Miss Vernon tells us, he is evidently on the lay for a grab; but I do not apprehend that you will have any serious trouble with him. Let him know that we are protecting the interests of Miss Vernon. I do not think he will care to risk another encounter with me. He has had some little experience in that line that has not been altogether agreeable to him."

Again Rolina rising to go, accompanied by Mr. Edson, began to open her pocketbook, which she had been holding in her hand.

"No money for us this time," said the lawyers, each putting in about half the words. "We have gathered from what you have told us, that the payment of the mortgage is a gift from you to those old people, and you must permit us to add the small tribute of the slight professional services we have the pleasure of rendering you in the matter."

"This is Mr. Grimshaw's residence," said the driver, as he stepped down and threw open the door of the carriage.

What a change a few short years had made in that

once stately mansion. Since his daughter's elopement, which had been followed very shortly by the death of his wife, the soul of Nicodemus Grimshaw had become completely absorbed in the hoarding of money. Dismissing all but two of his servants, and reserving a suite of apartments on the second floor, he had allowed the remainder of the house, with the surrounding garden, to go to ruin as it would. No merry voices echoed through those halls; no dainty footsteps fell lightly upon the velvet carpets of his spacious drawing rooms. Grim and silent the house stood, a mere mockery of what it once had been.

The bell was answered and the door opened by a servant, who, from his slow movements, and general dead-and-alive appearance, did not seem to be called upon to perform that service more than twice a year.

"Is Mr. Grimshaw at home?" Mr. Edson asked, as the man stood regarding them with a heavy, stupid gaze.

The question was asked the second time; and the man after drawing his hand across his brow to wake himself up, answered sullenly:

"He don't see visitors!"

"Take these cards to him," said Mr. Edson.

The man disappeared with the cards, and returning in a few moments with a slight increase of animation, asked:

"What is your business?"

"We have called to pay some money," said Mr. Edson.

Could the reader have looked in upon the man to whom these messages were sent, he would have beheld a piteous spectacle; a feeble old man, with pallid, sunken features and gray locks, sitting, or rather crouching in an armchair, his head bowed and resting upon his hands,

In his counting room, or on 'change, the once vigorous merchant was himself again, even yet. But few would notice any marked alteration, except that the expression of grasping greed, and artful, overreaching cunning, was each year becoming more deep, fixed and confirmed. There, among business men, and in business hours, he was always bright, active, and on the alert to secure the best bargains, and turn the tide of business so as to secure for himself the largest profits. But in the seclusion of his own home, with no eye save that of God to rest upon him or mark his movements, he yielded himself to the full sway of the demons of wretchedness and despair.

The message "money to pay" soon brought the answer: "You can come right up. This way."

"I don't quite understand who these parties are, and why they are coming to pay me money," Mr. Grimshaw was saying to himself. But the film began to break and clear itself away from his mental vision when the young lady entered, and he recognized her as the amiable and benevolent person from whom he was expecting to receive four thousand dollars for the McCready property, so soon as by a little more sharp practice he could get it into his hands.

"Ah, Miss Roletta, I am glad to see you, but did not expect you so soon," he said. "You were to call again in about two months. I am not yet ready to close that business with you."

"My client, Miss Vernon," interposed Mr. Edson, "has called simply to pay the balance due on a mortgage made to you five years ago by William H. McCready."

At the name of *Vernon*, Nicodemus Grimshaw started as if a serpent had struck him.

"Vernon! Vernon!" he repeated. "What—who?"

with a wild, startled look. "I addressed you as Miss Roletta, when you called at my counting room a few days ago."

"My professional name, Mr. Grimshaw," replied Rolina quietly. "And sufficient for the preliminary inquiries I desired to make at that time."

"What is the meaning of this, sir?" said Grimshaw, turning to Mr. Edson. "Am I to be the victim of a fraud—conspiracy—a deliberate swindle? This young woman"—his voice trembling and fairly rattling with rage, "came to my store ten days ago, and agreed to purchase a certain place in Blissburgh for four thousand dollars, to which I was to give her a clear title at the end of about fifty days."

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Grimshaw," interposed our heroine composedly. "I made no such promise; although in your grasping cupidity you endeavored to entrap me into an agreement of that sort."

With a gentle wave of his left hand, Mr. Edson intimated to the indignant girl that she had better say no more just at that time, but let him do the most of the talking.

"Miss Vernon is now ready, Mr. Grimshaw," he repeated blandly, "to pay the balance due on that McCready mortgage. Please let us know the amount."

If a sudden stroke of palsy had gone through his liver and lungs the old miser could scarcely have been more appalled.

"But the contract the young lady made with me!" he began furiously.

"What is the amount due on the mortgage?" repeated Mr. Edson, with an unruffled manner.

Again the old man groaned more deeply, as if resigning a priceless treasure; then opened his desk, took out the bond and mortgage, and figured up the amount due,

eight hundred dollars and six months' interest, together with two hundred and thirteen dollars to pay the estimated cost already incurred in the foreclosure proceedings.

Mr. Edson took the statement, struck his pencil through the bill of costs, and then deducted one hundred dollars with interest for two years, and handed the bill of items back, less by three hundred and twenty-seven dollars.

"What does this mean?" demanded Grimshaw, pale with rage.

"Simply that you received one hundred dollars two years ago, for an extension of the mortgage, and the time of the extension has not yet expired."

Again the old miser groaned, and his head fell forward on his hand.

"It will be for my client's interest of course, to have you refuse the money we are now offering," pursued his tormentor quietly. "In that case, proceedings to set aside the mortgage for usury will be immediately——"

"Let me have your money, take your satisfaction paper, and get out of my presence forever," exclaimed Grimshaw with the fierceness of a tiger cheated of its victim.

"Here is some one else on important business, Mr. Grimshaw, who says he must see you," said the servant entering just as Nicodemus Grimshaw had affixed his name to the satisfaction paper, and pocketed seven hundred and seven dollars, instead of the four thousand he had hoped to get.

"Tell him I can't see him now," he answered savagely.

"But he says he will see you, and he's coming right in," persisted the servant; and at the door of Grim-

shaw's apartment stood the strange individual who had once before visited him.

Mr. Grimshaw uttered a startled cry. Who could this man be, why had he come again at this time? Was he an emissary of ill omen? did he come to forebode his downfall?

"Nicodemus, I've searched and searched for them," said the stranger, advancing with hand upraised. "And now I *know* you've got them—you are keeping them hid away from me. But I *must* have them, or I cannot live."

Rolina paused a moment near the door, to observe the poor stranger, while Mr. Edson kindly bade her good-day and left.

"Good-day, Miss Vernon," said Mr. Grimshaw, snapping the words through his teeth, and intended to give the young lady a distinct intimation that he desired her to leave before she learned any more of his private affairs.

"Vernon! Vernon!" repeated the poor stranger. "Surely I have heard *that* name before." He pressed his hand to his forehead; and then turning on Rolina a wild, strange look, he continued:

"Who are you?" and then as suddenly tottering against the wall, buried his face in his hands, and sobbed like a child.

Nicodemus Grimshaw sat as though turned to stone, gazing straight before him, like one in a waking dream, while Rolina, after a short hesitation, approached the stranger, with a tender pity shining in her soft eyes.

"What is the matter, my poor friend?" she said encouragingly. "What do you wish to find? Perhaps I can help you."

The stranger let fall his hands from before his face and gazed upon her with wondering, dilated eyes.

"Who are you?" he repeated, although his quivering lips rendered his voice almost inarticulate. "And you look so much like——"

His faltering speech failed him entirely, and he stood once more groaning and gazing blankly upon her.

"I am one that will gladly be your friend, and help you, if I can," said Rolina gently. "Tell me where you live, and I will take you home, for you look too ill to be abroad. And then I will do whatever else I can for you."

"Where I live?" repeated the poor creature, while the tears once more coursed down his cheeks. "I have no place even to *die* in. Nowhere in this wide world is there a door that would open to let me in, or a roof to cover me from the storm and cold. But I wouldn't care," he went on excitedly, "if only *they* were with me. But they are taken away, and I cannot find them. Ah, Nicodemus," he continued, turning to Grimshaw, as that terrible light once more leaped to his eyes. "Go to your splendid church, kneel on your velvet cushions, and pray, *if you dare*;" and looking sternly into his eye he shook one finger threateningly at him.

Grimshaw could endure it no longer. Springing from his seat, he faced his accuser with flaming eyes.

"Take yourself out of this house!" he hissed. "And never dare to show yourself here again, or I'll have you thrown into jail—or worse."

He was about to ring for a servant to enforce his command but our heroine quietly intercepted him.

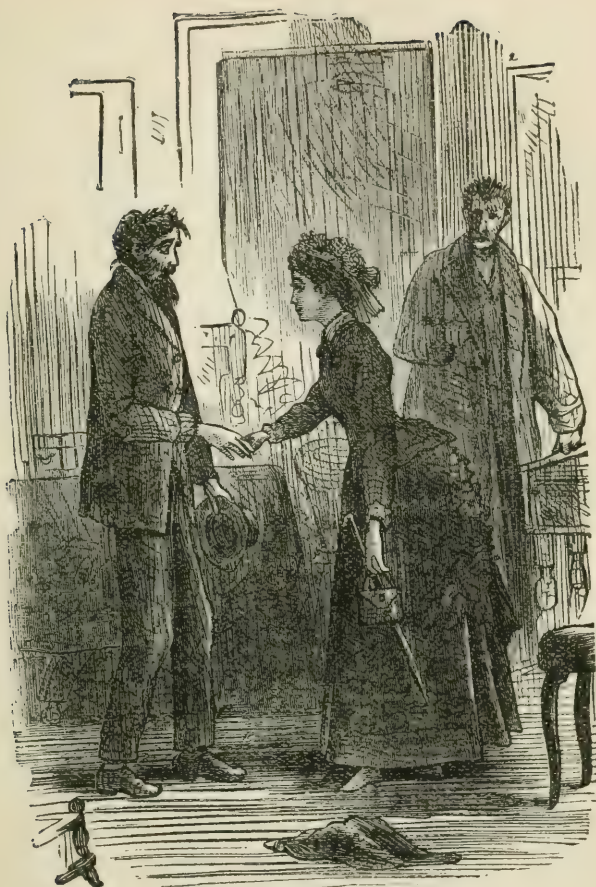
"There is no need to call assistance, Mr. Grimshaw. I will see that this poor man leaves your house peacefully. Good-morning."

She once more approached the shivering stranger, extending her hand to him with an air of kindly protection that he seemed to feel and appreciate.

"Come, my friend," she said gently. "You shall have a home, as comfortable as I can give you. Will you come with me?"

"With you?" repeated the poor creature, in a voice whose tender pathos was indescribable. "Yes, I will go with you. I can trust you, for you look like *her*, and she would not deceive me. And perhaps you will bring me to her."

He placed his hand in hers, and Rolina led him gently from the room and down the stairs to where her carriage was waiting at the lower door.



"YES, I WILL GO WITH YOU."

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE THORN BENEATH THE ROSE.

“ Our innocence is not our shield,
They take offence who have not been offended,
They speak our ruin, too, who speak us fair;
And death is often ambushed in their smiles;
We know not whom we have to fear.”

—*Young.*

IN this lower, imperfect world, the highest joys and the keenest disappointments are closely interwoven in the experience of the same individual. Scarcely has joy gladdened his heart and quickened his life, when disappointment comes in some form to turn the sunshine into darkness.

The fame of our heroine increased steadily, and ere long she began to experience that intoxicating delight which a consciousness of public favor and applause liberally bestowed never fails to awaken. Her sweet voice and innocent, attractive manner, brought the young men of the period in crowds to the Opera House. Bouquets were strewn with lavish hand at her feet, many artfully inclosing tinted and monogrammed epistles, portraying in most fervid language the havoc the charming *cantatrice* was making in the susceptible and sentimental bosoms of the writers.

But around our little friend guardian hands had ere this carefully reared a bulwark of defense against all assaults of that nature. Although delighted and flattered at being the recipient of public admiration, she

did not desire nor entertain their individualized expressions of love and affection. The bouquets were kept—for flowers were both desirable and expensive—and the *billets-doux* were hastily glanced over and consigned to the flames.

But even had Rolina been less competent to take care of herself, she would have been saved from any annoying importunities on the part of her admirers by the vigilance of Tim Tot, who hovered around her with jealous care, and caused it to be generally understood that within the precincts of his establishment he was her champion. Rolina felt very grateful for his protecting care, but had yet to learn that a serpent may lurk beneath the fairest flower, and the deadliest blow come from the hand of him we have called friend.

She was sitting in the "green room" one morning, after a long and somewhat tedious rehearsal—waiting until it would be cleared of the chattering bevy of performers who had flocked in ahead of her to procure their outdoor wraps, and finally lost herself in a reverie. Rousing at last, with a start, she perceived that the company had entirely dispersed, and that the only other person in the room was Tot, whose somewhat stupid gaze was fixed intently upon her.

"A penny for your thoughts," he said banteringly.

"They are not worth it, Mr. Tot," Rolina answered, smiling.

"Remembering your first dream of love, I suppose?"

Rolina laughed merrily.

"You will have to try again, Mr. Tot. We cannot remember what we have never known, can we?"

"Do not say that, Miss Roletta. Behold one before you who loves you profoundly." Tot responded, laying his hand on his heart with a melodramatic air.

"You love the bank bills I bring to your ticket-box,

no doubt," Rolina answered, with no other thought than that his remarks were silly badinage, and in very bad taste.

"No," protested the manager. "I love *you*, Roletta, your glorious voice, your radiant self!" and his voice actually trembled with excitement.

"Oblige me by saying no more, Mr. Tot," said Rolina, observing that he was rivetting upon her a gaze that awakened very unpleasant emotions. But without heeding her request, Tot rushed suddenly forward and fell on his knees before her.

She sprang back as from a serpent.

"Mr. Tot," she said firmly, "I will permit no unbecoming demonstrations of this sort. The native dignity of pure womanhood was aroused now, and quite superseded the momentary fear. "Rise sir, and stand up like a man."

"Not until you promise to make me happy," persisted the manager, whose blurred eyes and thick utterance betrayed the fact that his foolish and improper behavior was in consequence of the potations in which he had been indulging that morning—a weakness to which he was occasionally liable.

"Then I have only to wish you good-morning," said Rolina quietly, yet seriously disturbed at his persistence, so entirely unlike the respectful deference he had hitherto manifested. She quickly secured her hat and wrap, and turned toward the door, but before she reached it Tot gained his feet, and reaching her side, laid a heavy hand on her arm.

"Take your hand from me, sir," she exclaimed indignantly.

"Never, until you promise," Tot replied, with dogged obstinacy.

"This is not the conduct of a gentleman, sir."

"Pardon me, Roletta, but I do love you," urged Tot, loosing his hold, but still preventing her exit. "If you will only love me in return, you shall have everything you can wish—all the money you may want to spend."

"Are you forgetting, Mr. Tot, that you have a wife and family?" interrupted Rolina with an angry flash of her eye.

"What if I have?" he demanded insolently. "My income is sufficient for——"

"Not another word, sir!" said Rolina in a tone of firm command. "Let me pass, this instant."

But, blinded by passion and drink, and enraged at being repelled in a defiant and even scornful way by a weak, feeble girl, Tot seized her again by the arm, and dragged her across the room toward his private office. Just at that juncture, however, he as suddenly released his hold, for the blade of a keen penknife in the disengaged hand of the resolute girl had sunk half its length into his wrist.

Rolina had heard somewhere that in improving a favorable opportunity, the first chance is always the best. In ten seconds more she was out of the building and on the street, her heart in her throat.

"So I have found the thorn in that bed of roses!" she murmured sadly, as she wended her way homeward. "My only source of revenue is gone—cut off forever. But He who has provided me a way of escape from this peril will direct me to some other and perhaps better way than even this has been. When He permits one door to be closed He opens another."

Drawing down her veil Rolina walked on, the blood sending hot, throbbing flushes to her cheeks. She had accumulated a small sum during her long-continued and remunerative employment; but she had become sufficiently familiar with domestic and financial affairs

to know that a brief period of inactivity would suffice to exhaust her resources, and especially as she had another for whom she was now providing—the homeless outcast whom she had rescued from the wrath of Nicodemus Grimshaw.

Before she reached home, her spirits, naturally buoyant and cheerful, had recovered in a large measure from the discouraging effects of her late encounter, and she resolved to waste no time in vain regrets over the past, but to direct her energies at once to the point of finding some other, and possibly more desirable employment.

Mrs. McCready was out when Rolina reached home; and taking the morning papers that lay in a pile on a small table in the basement, she carried them up to her room. Our heroine was a willful girl, it is true, but she was energetic, practical, and faithful to her own convictions of duty and right. From among the many advertisements she finally selected one that seemed to commend itself to her tastes and inclinations.

“WANTED—A companion for an invalid lady. One who is intelligent, of a cheerful disposition, and a good reader, may apply at 195 — Street.”

“That would probably suit me nicely,” Rolina soliloquized, transferring the slip to her pocketbook. “I think I have some of those qualifications, if not all. At any rate I will apply.”

She left the house and walked briskly in the direction indicated. When she reached the house a momentary qualm of nervous doubt and premonition of disappointment caused her to hesitate a moment. Then with her courage and resolution rising, and bright visions of a more congenial employment filling her heart, she pulled the bell knob. The door was opened

promptly, and a little girl requested her to state her business.

"I have called," said our heroine, "in answer to an advertisement for a companion for an invalid lady. Can you tell me if the position has been filled?"

"I will see. Please to step inside," and the girl immediately ascended the richly carpeted stairs.

"The young person will please walk up," floated down to Rolina a moment later. The young person accordingly walked up, and meeting her guide at the upper landing, was ushered into the presence of an elderly lady, who reclined luxuriously in a wide easy-chair.

"Be seated, please. So you are the young person who desires a situation. Dear me; I had no idea that I would be so bored. Over twenty have been here already to-day, and not one of them any better fitted for the situation than a calf, and I don't suppose you will turn out any better."

"Perhaps I may," said Rolina with quiet dignity. "I would like to have you give me a trial. I will endeavor to please you."

"They all say that; but I am a very peculiar person, sensitive and delicate, and it is extremely difficult to find a companion who can be of any service to me. Persons of refined and delicate sensibilities are the only class of people I ever associate with. I am extremely peculiar, young woman. Have you ever lived as companion to any one?"

"No, madam," Rolina replied, with respectful brevity.

"Dear me, what a trial to the nerves this catechizing is. I have asked that question more than fifty times to-day. What has been your employment?"

"I have been engaged as a solo singer, in——"

Rolina got no further. The lady started forward in her chair, and regarded her visitor with dilated eyes.

"A *what?* you've been a—goodness gracious! *What?*"

"A public solo singer, madam," Rolina repeated with calm distinctness.

"Mercy on me, to think that I should have an application from *such* a source, that a character of *that* sort should actually intrude into my presence."

"What is my crime, madam?" Rolina exclaimed, rising and fixing her clear eye steadfastly upon the invalid. "My employment, though humble, has not been a low one. I have performed my duties faithfully, and in doing so have contributed to the innocent amusement and gratification of the public. I am not conscious of having done anything that should subject me to the censure your words imply."

She stood before the lady a moment longer, steadfast in her innocence, calm in her integrity of soul and purpose, an atmosphere of purity surrounding her, and lighting up her fair young face with a radiant beauty. The invalid gazed at her for a moment in a half-dreamy way; then sinking back in her chair, waved her hand, as though to ward off some infection.

"Jane, show this person out and bring me my vinaigrette," she said, showing decided symptoms of hysterics. The little maid, who had been an interested spectator, advanced toward our heroine.

"This way," was all she deigned to utter, as she elevated her little snub of a nose; and having once conveyed her visitor fairly over the threshold, slammed the door with a revengeful bang, as though that was to blame for admitting such characters into the presence of her immaculate and highly sensitive mistress.

It was too late for any further applications that day,

Besides, they would be expecting her at home; so Rolina returned, finding, to her astonishment and indignation, no less a person than Tim Tot in the parlor awaiting her. Becoming considerably sobered in the interval, and realizing that his popularity and his pocket would each suffer a heavy blow by the loss of his star performer, he had called in the vain hope of undoing the mischief of the morning. With the most abject apologies and appeals for pardon, he begged her to overlook the "unfortunate accident," and return. He would, he assured her, ever esteem her his best friend, would treat her henceforth at all times with becoming respect, and even increase her salary, if that were a necessary inducement.

Rolina heard him through in grave silence; then as he finished, and sat nervously twirling his hat in his hands, and waiting for an answer, she replied with quiet, yet resolute composure:

"No, sir. I shall not return to your employ any more."

"But my dear Miss Roletta, your engagement," he stammered.

"Is cancelled, sir, by your act."

"But consider the public, my dear young lady——"

"You should have considered that before, sir. It is too late now."

"Will nothing induce you to forgive my error?"

"You have my answer. Good-day, sir," and she turned to leave the room.

A few hours before Tot was a suppliant for her love; now for her mercy.

"Miss Roletta," he said as she was passing out. "I cannot accept this as your final decision. I believe you will, after thinking the matter over, and advising with your friends, conclude to accept the humble apology I

have made, and continue your engagement. I am a man of the world, and if I commit an error occasionally I am always ready to make the *amende honorable*. I will send a carriage for you at 8 o'clock."

Rolina made no further reply, and the manager left.

The carriage came at the appointed hour, and rolled back to the Opera House. Palpitating between hope and fear, Tot opened the door and looked in. His star performer was not there.

Jumping into the carriage, Tot drove to her residence as rapidly as possible, rang the bell, and sent up his card, which was handed back to him in a few minutes, with the words—"No answer," pencilled on the margin in the well-known hand of Rolina.

Returning to the Opera House Tot was met by an usher, who told him that the audience had become very impatient, the time for the appearance of their favorite *cantatrice* having come and passed, and that they were making the house ring with calls and stampings.

What could Tot do? He was in a frenzy of excitement. A lie, promptly concocted and well delivered was his most available resort. Accordingly, coming before the audience, he announced that he had just received the sad notification that in consequence of sudden and serious indisposition, Mlle. Roletta would be unable to appear that evening. He hoped she would soon recover, to which generous wish the audience responded with a hearty cheer. Meantime other members of the company would use their best endeavors to amuse and entertain them.

Having delivered this little speech, Tot retired, and the larger part of the audience followed his example.

Mlle. Roletta's absence from the Opera House proved more than temporary, however. No more did her name appear upon the widespread show bills. A large

portion, also, of the better class, of the patrons, whom her simple heart-stirring ballads had attracted, and whose constant patronage had been making for Mr. Tot a business name and fame, fell away; and with many bitter maledictions upon his presumption, he realized to his sorrow that the day of his imprudence and folly had been the day of his ruin.

And yet, while Tim Tot was lamenting his misfortune, and urging his remaining performers to do their best to make up the loss, our heroine, so far from deriving any immediate benefit from the step she had taken, was seated in her little room with her head resting on her hand, and her face full of earnest solicitude. The means upon which she had depended for the furtherance of her benevolent designs was suddenly and irretrievably cut off, and the struggle for bread must begin anew.

Once more a football upon the great, open stage of life, with a despondent, and sometimes almost sinking heart, Rolina began the struggle afresh; answering advertisements and making applications at various offices and institutions.

One of her first lessons in her hard struggle with poverty that returned only too soon was that plain Rolina Vernon, friendless and out of employment, was quite another and very different person from Mlle. Roletta, the popular *cantatrice*, whose sweet voice and winning manners had brought so many bouquets and plaudits.

A separate and distinct individual, so she seemed, not only to others, but to herself. Persons who, two months before would have thought themselves honored to receive from her a bow of recognition, had apparently no desire to renew or make the acquaintance of the indigent young woman whose only recommendation

so far as they could now see or know, was her beauty and innocence.

"It would detract from the hitherto irreproachable character of their institution were they to indorse, or recommend to positions of trust, any save those provided with proper references from reliable sources. They were extremely sorry, they wished her every success; and if she could obtain the necessary indorsement from some prominent person they would be most happy to take her case under consideration," and a deprecating smile and wave of the hand, with a look toward the door, would show her that there was no help there.

"Can it be," she would sometimes say, in a spasm of momentary bitterness, "that in this great city, where so many profess to follow in the footsteps of Him whose continual precept and example was—'inasmuch'—even to the meanest, humblest and lowest of His creatures, that there cannot be found so much as one heart to sympathize with me and a hand to aid me?"

Must she again be reduced to the necessity of depending upon the scanty resources of those dear friends with whom she was living? must she consent to receive aid from them, in return for what she had done in paying off that mortgage, and also permit them to assist her in taking care of the unfortunate and destitute stranger whom she had undertaken to protect and support? Sometimes, in her moments of anxious depression, she was tempted to follow the example so often witnessed and cast the poor unknown upon the mercies of some public institution. But as often as the thought came, the remembrance of the pleading look in his mournful eyes, the confiding, clinging pressure of his thin, wasted hand, on that memorable day when she had become his champion and protector, would return,

and the temptation died, vanquished by a still firmer resolve that come what might, she would never desert this poor creature to whom she was the only friend and guardian.

She was sitting in her own room, one day, after a visit to the chamber of the invalid, while thoughts like these were surging through her mind. It was morning; heavy clouds overhung the earth, and ever and anon as the sun pierced them, his bright ray was almost immediately obscured again. It seemed to Rolina an appropriate symbol of her checkered life. Dark, dreary, with here and there a sunshine ray of brief prosperity, only showing more clearly the darkness of her orphaned condition. And yet, high above all, in the heaven of her mind, its brightness penetrating sooner or later through even the darkest clouds of doubt or despondency, shone the Sun of Hope born of Heaven, flooding her soul with its warm and living beams.

In this way her young heart was buoyed up, and despite the discouragements which for a time seemed almost to crush her spirit, she was sustained by the confident belief that she would yet in some way obtain useful, honorable, and remunerative employment.

From a newspaper before her, she singled out an advertisement.

“WANTED—A young lady to travel as companion to an invalid.”

To Rolina's ardent, imaginative mind, the word “travel” had been as the *open sesame* to untold wonders and delights. If only she could go abroad for a year or so, it might open to her a way to raise both herself and her friends to permanent comfort. Resolved to run no risk by delay, she hastily prepared for the new venture.

She was soon in front of a quiet hotel. The edifice wore a modest, home-look, with its bright brick front, each brick so evenly marked with a streak of white. Attracted by the unostentatious, retired air of the place, Rolina entered without hesitation, and approaching the clerk's desk, asked:

"Can you tell me, please, is the party in who advertised for a traveling companion?"

"Yes, miss, I believe so. Pompey," to a negro waiter—"show this young lady up to twenty-seven," and with a smirking bow to our heroine as she stepped after her guide, he turned to a young sport standing near his desk.

"That's Roletta."

"The deuce it is," said the party addressed. "If I'd known that I would have taken a second look at her."

"Fact! no one else, Gus. And wasn't I dying for her a year ago. Bouquets by the dozen, and all that sort of thing. Offered to see her home one day, and got snubbed."

"That so, Tom? Then let us shake hands over the ashes of our buried hopes."

"What—you, Gus? Gracious sakes! as my Aunt Jerusha used to say. With pleasure, my boy," and they shook hands with the energy of two pugilists about to begin a fistic encounter.

"What brings her here and what caused her sudden disappearance from the Opera House?"

Some further conversation and half-uttered suggestions were indulged in by those fast young men; but neither the mental nor the moral state of the reader would be benefited by learning what they said.

Up the stairs and into a sitting room, Rolina followed her sable guide; and while he was in the next room with Mr. Sweetzer, the advertiser, describing as well

as he could the manner and appearance of the young lady who had called, she was building some beautiful air castles in which to glide over the world, while engaged as a traveling companion to the invalid lady.

Youth is ever hopeful and sanguine, its impulses strong and joyous. Imagination catches the first bright ray, and sees in it the boundless wealth of the sunshine; nor is it until the thunder rolls, and the storm has actually commenced, that the bright dream is dimmed, and it is seen that the beautiful vision was only a myth. Could we dwell in an atmosphere of eternal youth, with impulses unfettered, and the confidences of our ideal life unimpeached, unbetrayed by the realities of sad experience, and unsullied by time, what a happy world it would be!

"Massa Sweetzer will see you, miss," said the darky, reappearing. "Come dis way."

The announcement roused Rolina from her day dream, and rising, she followed the servant to the farther end of the apartment, where he opened a door, and said:

"Dis am de young lady, sah." The door then clanged to, and he was gone.

The room in which Rolina now found herself was neatly furnished, and quite in keeping with the outward aspect of the building. Nothing at the first glance to excite surprise, or awake any unpleasant suspicions.

"Be seated, please, miss," spoke a soft, masculine voice, from the depths of a large easy-chair, buried so deeply in ample cushions that our heroine was for an instant at a loss to determine who was addressing her.

"Please draw your chair nearer to me so that I can see you. You will excuse my not rising, as I am an invalid," apologized the occupant of the chair.

Rolina was not quite satisfied with that smooth, oily voice; on her sensitive ear it jarred unpleasantly. She obeyed, however, and found herself *vis-à-vis* with a small, wiry man, whose flabby features bore an unmistakable stamp of sensuality. The brave girl felt a nervous tremor for an instant; then it passed, and she was herself again.

"Miss ——?" began the smooth voice.

"Vernon, sir," supplied our heroine.

"Excuse me, miss, I thought your name was Roletta," was the insinuating rejoinder.

"Vernon, sir!" Rolina repeated calmly. "You advertised for a companion to travel with an invalid, did you not?"

"Yes, miss!" the voice ended in a sigh.

"May I know the lady's name? Is she your wife?"

"Myself, Miss Roletta—Vernon—excuse me. I am the invalid." The little man emerged from the chair to an upright position. "I am about to travel, and am desirous to secure the companionship of some estimable young lady, as——"

"Pardon me, sir—good-morning." Rolina's splendid air castles had fallen to the ground, and she stood aghast amid the ruins. The man said no more, but watched her with a sinister smile, as the insulted girl crossed the room, reached the door, and found it *locked*!

"Pray be seated again, miss," said the invalid with an insinuating smile.

"Open that door, instantly," said our heroine, confronting the miscreant with a firm, defiant air.

"My dear Roletta," said the base creature, "our acquaintance is too short to be thus rudely broken off, and the pleasure of your society too great to be resigned. Pray be seated," he continued, his small basilisk eyes gleaming at her, his repulsive features in strange contrast with his even, methodical voice.

"I accept no apology, sir, for this outrage," Rolina exclaimed, with a flash like lightning in her eye. "Release me, this instant." Her self-possession did not forsake her for a moment, as she regarded the vile wretch with an undaunted look, nor did it occur to her at that time that she was exposed to any peril or danger that she was not able to meet and repel.

The villain did not heed the demand nor say anything further, but was silently approaching her, when with a quick glance around she espied where his bell rope hung. A vigorous peal rang through the house, and the call was instantly answered by the parting of a hanging curtain at the side of the room, and a look from the astonished visage of the negro servant.

With one more flashing glance at the enraged and discomfited scoundrel, Rolina darted through the aperture into another room, thence into the hall, down the stairs and into the street.

When several blocks away she was free and safe, a fuller and clearer consciousness of the deadly peril she had escaped came over her like a stroke at her heart. Everything swam blackly, dizzily before her eyes for a moment; then the spasm passed, and she clasped her hands, while the tears overran her eyes, and her pale lips murmured a heartfelt thanksgiving to Him whose ever-present care and mercy had for the second time rescued her from a similar peril.



LORD GORDON.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

AN IMPEDIMENT.

THE days passed merrily on in the circles of "upper tendom," but to one heart, each day was but a new link in a chain already too heavy to be borne.

For a week or more following her enforced engagement, a nameless indisposition had confined Bessie Ormsby at home, robbing her cheek of its delicate bloom, her step of its lightness; but within the select *coterie* to whom Mrs. Ormsby, with much conscious pride had imparted the news, the young lady's seclusion was looked upon quite as a matter of course, and in conformity with the etiquette which demanded a temporary withdrawal from vulgar eyes, before bursting upon them anew, in the dazzling rôle of a titled bride.

Bessie's failing health was not, however, allowed to serve as a plea for utter seclusion. Every afternoon, about the same hour, his lordship's stylish phaeton drew up in front of Mrs. Ormsby's residence; and with a cheek wan as from a long illness, save for the hectic flush which the mere mention of her suitor's name sufficed to induce, and a step whose increasing languor should have awakened the gravest apprehensions in the mind of any mother, each day Bessie descended to the parlor, to meet her waiting lover; suffered him to kiss her cheek, and listened mechanically to the trivial gossip with which he endeavored to beguile the time,

and when at last relieved of his presence, went back to her room to pass the remaining hours in solitude.

Mr. Ormsby had not yet returned from his western trip, and to Bessie's frequent inquiries as to his whereabouts, her mother invariably answered that she couldn't tell, they would probably hear from him soon.

Mrs. Ormsby really felt very little interest in her husband's movements, and had no desire to hasten his return home. Day after day, with the regularity displayed by the younger admirer, the colonel's elegant turnout and high-stepping grays were seen before her door; and day by day a subtle *something* was creeping over the heart and senses of the wife, that made all thoughts of her husband, all considerations of the tie that had so long linked their lives together, seem tame and distasteful to her; while she was yielding herself more and more to the fatal and spell-benumbing influence which this man was throwing around her. Since the night when with her hand warm from the pressure of his lips, he had bent over her and called her *Clara*, the tones of his deep, magnetic voice had thrilled along her nerves like living fire. Enchanted were the hours passed in his company; and in the wakeful watches of the night, of which she now had many, her eyes often turned instinctively as if to meet and welcome the potent glances that seemed to rivet and enchain her soul. The hours of his absence appeared to be borne along on leaden wings; and when the hour that ever faithfully presaged his coming arrived, her cheek and lip took on a more vivid bloom.

One morning, in response to the colonel's elegantly monogrammed card, Mrs. Ormsby tripped down to the parlor with the buoyant, elastic step of a girl. Her eyes were dark with excitement, and her lips parted in a smile of more than welcome, as she extended her hand.

"Punctual to the minute! You deserve immortal honors for the fidelity with which you keep an engagement, Colonel Allen. And what a matchless day. The park will look like a lower paradise."

The pressure that closed upon her hand sent one of those electric thrills through her soul, while the deep, magnetic eyes of her guest held hers as with a charm.

"Strangers will be puzzled, I fancy to determine which is the bride-elect, at the wedding," he said finally. "You are renewing your youth and beauty daily, Clara."

Mrs. Ormsby's hand was not withdrawn, but her left index finger shook a merry reproof. "That is the second time you have taken that liberty with my name, Colonel Allen."

With an earnestness more than half genuine, the colonel looked down upon her, reading the emotion she strove vainly to conceal.

"And as I was not reprov'd, I dared to hope that it was not offensive. The name leaped to my lips unconsciously—its stately dignity suits you so well. I have had the honor of being presented at court, but I never saw diadem rest upon a crowned head with more matchless grace than your regal name rests upon you."

The hand he held was again raised to his lips. With her brain whirling dizzily, Mrs. Ormsby disengaged her hold and turned partly away.

"I will forgive you this time, if you promise to desist from such egregious flattery in future," she said, trying to speak lightly. "But take a seat for a few minutes, do. It really seems like an age since we last met, and there is plenty to talk about."

"It is, I believe, only twenty hours since we parted," replied the colonel. "But to me it seems like as many days. But whether it be days, hours or minutes, it is

long enough for me to be prepared and eager to enjoy again the treat of *Riene* Clara's conversational powers."

"I shall positively refuse to say another word unless you desist from your compliments," said Mrs. Ormsby, with a deprecating motion of her hand. "Your stock of flattery appears to be absolutely inexhaustible."

"'Sweets to the sweet,' you know," retorted the undaunted colonel. "But there! I promise not to offend again. Now please prepare for our ride and let us make the most of this beautiful day."

"And the right day for me to be out," rejoined Mrs. Ormsby, rising. "His lordship will soon be here, and *mater familias* would be *de trop*, of course; and with a bright, backward look she flitted from the room.

Left to himself, the colonel picked up a small volume bound in blue and gold, and began listlessly turning over its leaves, although the dreamy far-away look in his eyes, showed that he had very little appreciation of what he was doing. Colonel Allen had made temporary homes in almost every place of note in the world; and after a twenty years' absence from New York had returned fancy-free—his heart untouched by any of the beautiful women among whom he had moved, a caressed and welcomed guest. With genuine surprise he had recognized in the peerless woman—in the full maturity of physical development and perfection, enhanced by all that opulence could contribute—the timid, awkward girl of a score of years back, on whom he had bestowed only a few passing thoughts, and yet whose face, by one of those unaccountable freaks of fate, had remained indelibly impressed upon his memory. Pressing his claims upon the score of former acquaintance, the colonel soon became her constant companion and escort. Balls, operas, *matinées*, found him at her side, whenever her husband's society could be conveniently dispensed with.

Colonel Allen was obliged to acknowledge, although at first it wounded his vanity to do so, that in Mrs. Ormsby he had at last found his rival in beauty, fascination and wit, and he registered a vow, not heeding or caring what the final issue of the contest might be, that before he let go his grasp on that beautiful woman she should be brought under his influence far enough to realize that although she might in some respects be his rival, he was more than her master in the use of means by which the affection of those whom the bonds of marriage should hold, may sometimes be reached and enslaved.

With all his forces rallied and disposed with diplomatic skill, Colonel Allen began to be conscious that he was gaining ground. His arrows being pointed and tipped with those subtle arts which a man of the world knows so well how to employ, all the more irresistible because of the apparent absence of any sinister motive, were sent with unerring aim, and he soon saw and realized that every shot told; every onslaught weakened the defences which should be as an armor of steel around the heart of every woman whose love and fealty has been pledged at the marriage altar.

And as the enemy that enters men's mouths to steal away their brains often binds them beyond their power of resistance ere they are conscious of the approach of danger, so was the serpent of unhallowed passion slowly yet surely coiling its glittering folds around the heart of its victim, who, with her eyes blinded and her senses deadened by the fascinating brightness of the destroyer, was recklessly permitting the fatal and deadly grasp to be drawn more and more closely.

Colonel Allen having tossed the book aside, and sauntered over to the piano, was dreamily evoking desultory yet harmonious chords from the instrument—

for music was one of his many accomplishments—when a whiff of balmy perfume and a rustle of silk made him turn to greet his hostess, who said, as she pointed laughingly to a trailing vine that threw its luxuriant length over an ornamental hanging-basket:

“In a moment more, Colonel Allen, I would have fashioned an impromptu laurel wreath for your brow. How have you managed to pick up so many accomplishments?”

“I scarcely know,” he turned languidly, while one hand, fair as a woman’s and graced by a sparkling seal ring, yet lingered on the keys. “I think I must have imbibed them unconsciously—the reflected influence, probably, of the spheres of beauty and genius into which the star of my destiny has guided me. And from the enchanted waters upon which my bark is now sailing, I hope to catch the sweetest, most enduring inspiration of all.”

His eyes met hers for a moment, full; then with a nervous laugh she turned away, pulling at her glove.

“Colonel Allen, I have a mind to take off my things, and forbid you the house for a week, for such a willful violation of orders. I believe you have been fed on poetry from the day you were born.”

“I have been favored with earth’s sweetest, most genuine poetry—the sparkling glances of ladies’ eyes. But I really will not tempt your forbearance any longer. Let us start—are you ready?”

“Quite ready. You have just saved yourself, Colonel Allen. Another word of flattery, and you would have gone without me.”

“A happy escape. Allow me.”

The heavy door closed after them. Colonel Allen handed Mrs. Ormsby into the carriage, and the splendid steeds, scarce waiting their master’s command, skimmed away down the avenue.

Mrs. Ormsby had returned from her drive and was seated in her dressing room, when a low, nervous knock sounded on the door, and it opened to admit Bessie. Her face was paler than it had ever been before on any of these dreary, nerve-exhausting days since her engagement, and bore an expression that drew from her mother an exclamation of surprise. But her quiet, subdued tone dispelled the momentary alarm.

"Mother, what does *this* mean?" A faint, indignant glow tinged her white cheek, as she laid an open paper in her mother's lap, marked at an article setting forth with the customary flowery verbosity of reportorial effusions the approaching marriage of Miss Elizabeth Ormsby, daughter of one of the city merchant princes, to Lord Gordon Gordon, an English peer, and heir to immense estates across the water, and furthermore giving the date of the marriage as two weeks from that day.

"Who is responsible for this statement?" Bessie asked, pointing with a heightened color to the last line or two, as her mother glanced languidly at the leaded column.

"Lord Gordon, I suppose," Mrs. Ormsby answered with apparent carelessness. "I presume he considered it the most effective way to make known his good fortune."

"It is an act of unwarrantable discourtesy and presumption. Neither he nor any one else had any right to make such an announcement. The sooner it is corrected the better."

She spoke with forced composure, but her calm tone irritated and disturbed her mother, who gave the paper a pettish toss upon a side table as she said:

"Nonsense, Bessie. There is nothing really erroneous about it that I see."

"*Mother*," Bessie's gentle voice rang out with startling emphasis. "I accepted Lord Gordon as a suitor in obedience to your wishes, but to be hurried with such indecent haste into a union with him, is more than I can or will tolerate. I consented to the engagement in compliance with your desire that the matter might be definitely settled before he left for England; and I have been looking forward daily to a temporary relief from his unwelcome attentions. I understood positively from you and him that he expected to sail within a very short time—a few days, I supposed it meant."

Mrs. Ormsby gave utterance to a short, sarcastic laugh.

"Of course he intends to go—but on his *wedding tour*. His lordship laid the whole matter before me, some time ago, and I immediately sent to Paris for your *trousseau*. Everything will be ready for the wedding to take place on the day the vessel sails."

The pitiless, unprincipled conspiracy of which she had been made the victim was now unmasked; but Bessie still controlled her feelings.

"Why was I not told of this before, mother?"

"Told of it!" repeated her mother pettishly. "How could I tell you anything when you shut yourself in your room all day, like a hermit in a cell. Besides, I didn't consider it necessary. If you knew what a mountain of responsibility it involves to get things in train, you would be thankful to me for taking it all on myself. I supposed you understood from the first that when his lordship returned to England he expected to take you, his bride, with him."

"I understood nothing of the kind. Will father be home before that time?"

A flush that she vainly strove to suppress suffused the mother's face.

"How you do harp upon that subject, Bessie. I don't know when your father will be back. I have enough to do without keeping the run of his movements."

"Have you written to him, as you promised?"

"No, I haven't. I've been driven with business and company, and haven't had the time—in fact, forgot it. He is likely to be along though, any day now."

These words, intended as a sort of *placebo*, came too late. Bessie took a step forward, her white face expressing some of her father's stern resolution.

"Mother, you promised to write to father as soon as I complied with your request, which was done with that understanding. I have been daily expecting to hear from him; and I now positively refuse to take one step more until I hear from my father. I have been trifled with and deceived in this entire matter—have been made the victim of what I consider a deliberate conspiracy, and have a just right to delay the fulfillment of any promise that you, or his lordship, as you call him, may claim that I have made, until my father's consent is obtained."

Mrs. Ormsby looked up in utter consternation. Never before had words of such energy fallen from the lips of the gentle, yielding girl.

"Bessie, you are crazy! It *must* be done, now. By this notice you are publicly compromised——"

"Better be compromised in the estimation of the public by acts done by others without my consent or knowledge than in the estimation of my father through my own deliberate act. I am sorry to incur your displeasure, mother, but this matter shall go no further without his knowledge and approval."

"Checkmated, after all," groaned Mrs. Ormsby inwardly, as she noted the determined expression of her

daughter's face, and listened to the low, quiet, but intense tones of her voice. A scarlet flush darkened on the mother's cheek, and there were tears of vexatious perplexity in her eyes as she looked up.

"Very well, Bessie; I will write to him at once. But suppose the letter does not reach him in time? The interval is short—and it would *kill* me to have any impediment *now*. We would be the town talk for a month. Will you be satisfied if I write?"

Bessie hesitated a moment. It was hard to express the feelings she could not put away—a feeling of growing distrust in her mother's sincerity and perfect honor.

"I will be satisfied, mother, if you give me father's address, so that I may write by this afternoon's mail," she said presently. "I shall request him to answer by telegram, if he has not time to insure a reply reaching me otherwise. Will you give me the direction, that there need be no further delay?"

Without a word, Mrs. Ormsby rose, went to her dressing case and taking from a drawer a slip of paper, held it out with averted face; and taking it Bessie left the room.

Outside of the door the girl paused and leaned her head wearily against the casing. The brief, fictitious strength lent by excitement had deserted her, and she seemed like a fragile flower, half-severed from its stem by the cruel assaults of a tempest. This discovery of deliberate and heartless treachery on the part of one to whom she had looked for love and sympathy, came upon her like a fearful calamity. She stood there a moment, and fought with the sharp, sudden agony that pierced her heart, while a spasm convulsed her pale face, and a cold dew bathed her forehead. Then rousing herself, she toiled painfully up the staircase, and drawing writing materials toward her, indited a brief,

expressive note to her father more than one line of which was blotted with the tears she could no longer restrain.

The eventful period was approaching; three days more would bring it, when a telegram was handed in, directed to Bessie Ormsby, and containing the words:

“Will be home to-morrow evening.

“OSCAR ORMSBY.”

But he did not come. The evening preceding the day appointed for the wedding arrived, but Mr. Ormsby was not there. The telegram had decided nothing.

“If your father does not arrive before the appointed hour,” said Mrs. Ormsby with a trepidation she in vain sought to suppress, “the marriage must take place. By not forbidding it, in his telegram, he gives us reason to assume that he approves of it.”

“I see no reason for any such conclusion,” said Bessie. “If he had favored the marriage he certainly would have put in a word to that effect; would have told us to go on, or something of that kind.”

“As if a man would think of that. No, he merely wants us to know that he will be on hand for the ceremony. But he may be detained, of course, and you surely don’t mean to say, Bessie, that you will refuse to become the bride of Lord Gordon at noon, to-morrow, unless in the meantime you have some further or fuller consent from your father?”

“I do!” was the low, firm answer.

“I have one more proposal to make,” said Mrs. Ormsby, completely at her wit’s end. “If you still refuse, I will say no more, but from that day onward I shall never treat you or look upon you as a child of mine.”

"What is it, mother?" Again that dangerous pallor that had been showing itself lately swept over Bessie's face, and her head drooped upon her hand.

"I will go to-night to your pastor, Dr. Simpcox, and lay the whole case before him. Will you be guided by his advice?"

Bessie tried to muster up resolution to say that she also would go with her mother, but her heart failed her. She could struggle no further.

"Yes, mother, go; and if he advises that I shall marry that man, as I have no doubt he will, after hearing your statement, I shall lay my head on my pillow to-night, with no desire to see the light of another day."

Mrs. Ormsby drove at once to the doctor's residence, and an hour later, returned, armed with his full and cordial approval fortified by any number of contributory arguments as to the advisability and perfect propriety of the arrangement.

The wedding morning dawned; but while the face of Mrs. Ormsby wore a look of triumph hoped for rather than secured, in the wistful eyes of poor Bessie was the look of a martyr facing a swift-coming, inevitable doom.

But no one thought on that gala day of the skeleton in the closet hidden in that home of fashion and wealth. From foundation stone to roof-tree all was animated bustle. The "bride's bower" was alive with a bevy of chatting girls, and the bride-elect was being arrayed in the shimmering *trousseau* which she would have looked upon with more satisfaction had she been sure that its destined use was to robe her body for its burial.

The clock struck 10. The bride was still in the hands of her maidens, and Mrs. Ormsby, having carefully watched the packing of the last trunk—crammed to very lid, and now ready to be sent to the bridal state-

room already engaged on the steamer that was to leave at precisely 2 P. M., was on her way upstairs, when a sharp ring was heard at the door.

"Telegram," was shouted, with a quick electric intonation and with the missive, whatever it was, in her hand, Mrs. Ormsby was at that instant called by a merry voice that floated down from Bessie's room, bringing the words:

"This way, if you please, Lady Ormsby, your judgment is needed. We want everything to be absolutely *nonpareil*, on this all-important occasion, you know."

Thrusting the telegram into her pocket unopened, Mrs. Ormsby hurried up to the room. In the diversion that followed it was quite forgotten—and freighted with a few brief but momentous words it lay beneath the accumulation of handkerchief, gloves, and various *et cetera* with which her pocket had become in some manner filled.

Be the event one of mirth or mourning, joyous anticipation or impotent despair, the inexorable revolutions of time bring it with the same relentless certainty.

The church was crowded to its utmost capacity; but to the young bride, the triumphant burst of the Wedding March, that heralded the procession to the altar sounded like a funeral knell. With her shimmering bridal robes floating around her like a cloudy mist and her face deadly pale, Bessie Ormsby moved up through the aisle on the arm of Colonel Allen who had volunteered to assume that office for the occasion, the cynosure of all eyes, and took her appointed place at the altar, where she was joined by her prospective bridegroom.

Everything was in order, each in his right place. Then the surpliced rector, book in hand, read in slow, impressive tones:

. . . . "If any man can show just cause why this man and this woman may not be lawfully joined together, let him now speak, or else hereafter forever hold his peace."

As the last word left the rector's lips, a responsive voice rang through the lofty building, clear as a clarion—relentless as doom.

"There is just cause! The ceremony must not proceed!" At the sound of that voice Mrs. Ormsby uttered a wild, hysterical shriek, while Bessie swooned and fell backward into the arms of her attendants. The bridegroom's florid cheeks became of an ashen hue, and his teeth were locked convulsively.

"Who forbids this marriage?" demanded Dr. Simpcox.

"The father of Elizabeth Ormsby!" was answered in the same clear voice; and in another moment, Mr. Ormsby, with an officer at his side, was standing before the altar.

"I have an order for your arrest," said the officer quietly, addressing the *psuedo* bridegroom, and placing his hand on his shoulder, at the same time opening a formidable-looking document, and holding it before him. "You are described as James Merrill, *alias* Lord Gordon Gordon, and are wanted in England, under the extradition treaty, to be tried on the charge of forgery."

This message, delivered briefly and in the politest manner, gave the affair a different turn.

The doctor closed his book with a sigh, which might have been prompted by the thought that the two-hundred-dollar fee he had expected to receive was not likely to be forthcoming on that occasion.

Out of the crowded church two insensible figures were borne—that of the young bride-elect in the arms of

her father, while Mrs. Ormsby, whose indomitable nature had for the first time in her life succumbed to an appalling *dénouement*, was carried out by Colonel Allen.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE LAST STEP.

“The scream of rage, the groan, the strife,
The blow, the gasp, the horrid cry,
The panting, throttled prayer for life,
The dying’s heaving sigh,
The murd’rer’s curse, the dead one’s fixed, still glare,
And fears, and death’s cold sweat—they all are there.”

—Dana.

A SLOW, fine rain had been falling all day, and the lighted lamps shone upon wet pavements and muddy streets. Very few who possessed homes of their own, however humble, were abroad; but some of the many hundreds of the city’s *homeless* poor, who wander the streets alike in sunshine and storm, could be seen every where; crouching, perhaps, under the shelter of a doorway or stoop, or seated on a doorstep or curbstone extending a supplicating hand to every one who passed them, if haply to obtain, in that way, enough to keep life in their chilled and wasted bodies a few days or hours longer.

In a narrow, murky street, the pavement of which was broken and uneven, and the gutters reeking with stagnant water and *débris*, stood a low groggery of the vilest character, bearing the appropriate name of “The Sunken Steps,” although the sign that creaked dismally at one side made the more pretentious announcement, “Wines and Liquors of the Finest Quality.”

The damp, close smell pervading the room, with the

fumes of bad tobacco, and worse whisky, were enough to take one's breath away, almost. But look in, reader; we want you to see the place, and will not detain you long.

Around one of the tables sat four persons—two men and two women—who had been playing cards and drinking until a late hour. At last one of the men, having with his partner's help won all the money his opponent had, but without getting quite so drunk over his success as the other had over his losses, remarked:

"You've had enough for to-night, Jones! Go home!"

The dissolute-looking creature glared savagely at his self-constituted adviser.

"Who the devil authorized *you* to send me home? I pay for my liquor and will go home when I please. You have got my money, and you think you have got *me*—but you haven't."

"Have your own way, then, and go to the devil, if you like; but if you were even half a decent man you'd look after your wife a little. You haven't been near her for a week, and she will be here after you before you're an hour older."

"Let her come—curse her! it'll be the last time she tries that game on me," exclaimed Jones, bringing his fist down upon the table. "I'd like a chance to get rid of her," and he gave a leering look at one of the women, his partner in the game, which was returned with interest.

"Well, you've had my advice," said his opponent, "and if your neck goes into a noose it's no fault of mine."

"Take care of your own neck and not mine," retorted Jones. "Give us another deal, and let the winner treat. My money is out, but my chips are good."

They were soon deep in the game, and did not notice

the entrance of a woman, her head and shoulders covered with a thin, black shawl, which partially protected a faded calico dress. Her face was haggard and wan to the last degree, her eyes unusually brilliant, with a wild, despairing expression, her cheeks sunken and hollow, her lips parched and quivering—once the haughty, triumphant Arabella Grimshaw, the belle of the merchant's stately mansion—but ah! how fallen!

Pausing at the door, she glanced stealthily around the room. Having singled out the group she sought, she came forward, without attracting their attention, until she reached the table, when with one angry sweep of her arm she scattered the cards over the floor.

The players looked up in amazement; and as Jones caught the determined expression of his wife, his face turned at first a deeper crimson, and then suddenly changed to an ashen pallor. Every one who saw the sudden movement waited, with bated breath, for the next demonstration.

Pushing his chair back, without rising, the enraged husband fixed his bloodshot eyes upon the now thoroughly desperate and reckless woman.

"How dare you do that, and why are you here? You brazen hussy!" he demanded, with a savage hiss.

Arabella returned his gaze with an undaunted, defiant expression, although trembling from head to foot with an excess of nervous excitement.

"It is time, sir, for you to come home, and as you have not sense enough to come of your own accord, I have come for you."

"A nice place to go to; a very nice woman I would find there," sneered Jones.

"Samuel, don't trifle with me," exclaimed Arabella, her pale cheek flushing. "You dragged me down from affluence to poverty. You have been away from home

a week, not caring whether I lived or died. Now I command you to come back, or at least give me some of the money you are squandering here to keep me and my child from starving."

"You are entirely off, my love, in saying I don't care whether you live or die," sneered the miscreant. "The most agreeable errand I could perform on your account would be to take your measure to the undertaker," then changing his tone to one of sudden fierceness: "If you don't want to starve, go and earn money, as I do."

"I earn money?" repeated Arabella. "I had a good paying position, and could have laid by a comfortable sum; but you wrenched from me every cent I earned, and squandered it. You held me by the throat and threatened to murder me unless I told you where I had hidden the little pittance I had managed to save. And then I lost my place because my dress and appearance did not attract customers to the saloon. Not satisfied with forcing from me every cent of my money, you even robbed me of the new clothes I had bought and pawned them, to spend the proceeds in drink and gambling. Yes, you vile wretch, you have taken my money, my clothes—everything from me, and now I *demand* from you enough to keep together a little longer the body and soul of your wife and your starving babe."

Jones regarded her a moment longer with a mocking look, then drawing a five-cent piece from his pocket, gave it a careless toss upon the table.

"Take that and get a glass of whisky, to make your devilish tongue run a little faster; then go, or I'll make you."

The outraged woman took the coin from the table, and flung it full in the gambler's face.

"You dastardly hound, dare you treat me as a beggar, to be sent off with a five-cent piece? I will be your slave no longer. You shall not waste my money on *your women*, and leave me to starve."

"Will you go?" shouted Jones, livid with rage.

"Not until you come with me," was the defiant answer.

"Then go on ahead and tell the devil I'm coming after you." Jones shouted hoarsely, as springing to his feet he seized one of the heavy drinking glasses from the table and sent it whizzing through the air.

It struck poor Arabella full on the temple, and with a wild shriek she sank upon the floor. There was dead silence for a moment; then every one in the place rushed forward—some to raise the prostrate woman, others to seize her destroyer. But with a hasty glance around him, Jones cleared the group at a bound, dashed through the low door into the street, and off into the darkness of the night with a dozen men in hot pursuit, making the air ring with the fearful cry—"Murder!"

Arabella was still breathing when they raised her and placed her on a hastily improvised settle. As they bent over her her eyes opened, and her pale lips parted in a single whispered utterance:

"Father—send for my father, Nicodemus Grimshaw!" Then the white lids drooped heavily again. Exchanging a significant glance with his companions, one of the men set off to comply with that last request. Even among them the merchant's name was well known, and it was easy to find his residence.

In the meantime the escaping fugitive was being closely pursued by the inmates of the "Sunken Steps," and half a dozen policemen were now leading in the chase. Block after block was traversed, Jones shaping his course toward the river and the men re-

doubling their exertions to head him off. Out on to a pier he dashed, and reached the lower end just as the crowd were coming on. Then facing his pursuers for a moment, with a wild defiant laugh, he flung his hands above his head, and threw himself backward into the seething waters.

Instantly the foremost man plunged in after him. In the darkness he could not determine just where the suicide had gone down, but his hand soon came in contact with the floating body, and it was drawn up, and laid on the pier. One arm being raised, fell back as though weighted with lead.

It was too late for human justice. Stark upon the pier lay the dead body of him who was once the gay and fascinating Samuel Jones; while his soul, pierced through and through with heinous crimes, had plunged unbidden into that dark, unknown world, whither his hand had already sent the woman against whom his life had been one long-continued crime.

Nicodemus Grimshaw had been sitting all day long before his desk in the inner office of his Broadway establishment, vainly endeavoring to rally his distracted thoughts, and fix upon a plan to meet some unexpected exigencies that were confronting him. All had been going on prosperously with him for several years; he had been in power, spreading himself like a green bay tree. Wealth had flowed into his coffers, honor and prosperity had been greeting him on every side. Secure in his position in society and the church, possessed of that all-important passport to popular favor—money—that magic talisman, that like charity covers a multitude of sins—while in his church he stood among the highest, his position firmly and well secured, by the fact that his autograph was always found on every

public subscription list—by this means, under the cloak of piety and respectability, he had been enabled to carry on his nefarious schemes. But the end, long deferred was at hand.

On that sad day Nicodemus Grimshaw remained in his private office at his store until late in the evening; and then worn and weary, and oppressed with a strange foreboding, as of some impending calamity tugging at his heart, he dropped into a seat in the street car, and alighted within a block of his residence. His dinner was waiting for him, and he took his solitary seat at the table, the servant standing behind him, ready to obey his orders—but he had none to give. He drank half a cup of coffee, ate a few mouthfuls, and then pushing his plate impatiently away, left the table and retired to his room. His hot brandy punch was brought up, as usual; but even that seemed to him as if it came to mock his sorrow. He poured out half a glass, and took a sip or two, then pushed it aside, and leaned his head on his desk, and remained in that position perhaps three or four hours—he took no note of the time.

It was a cold, dismal night, and the howling wind playing around that dreary and almost empty house, seemed to its lonely occupant like the wailings of some lost soul.

Presently there was a sudden, startling ring at the lower door. Who could be there at that hour—long after midnight? A second and third ring followed, before the servant could be awakened and brought to the door. Nicodemus Grimshaw would have answered the bell himself, had he not been held motionless by a strange *something* that seemed to whisper: “There’s trouble now.”

“Is Mr. Grimshaw within?” rang through the halls,

and reached his ear, in a tone that meant: "Bad news for you!"

"His daughter wants him—has been murdered—is dying," were the next words that came with startling emphasis: and in another moment Grimshaw himself was at the door.

"Say no more, but lead on!" were his only words to the messenger; and in silence he followed his guide until the scene of the disaster was reached. A group was gathered in a corner, and as they entered the saloon one came forward to meet them.

"Here he is," the guide whispered. "Is she conscious?"

"She is dead—died ten minutes ago," was the low reply.

"We are too late, sir," said the man, addressing Grimshaw. "But there's the lady."

Grimshaw moved slowly forward, and gazed upon the motionless form before him with a dazed, apathetic look. That face which he had so often beheld radiant with health and joyous animation, now rigid, stark and ghastly, save where a long, red line marked the deep cleft upon the forehead. Once she was the belle of the drawing room, the pride and delight of his heart. In a moment of anger and self-will she had defied his authority and fled from his home. Now she lay before him, cold in death, clad in the tattered garb of abject poverty, every trace of her former beauty gone, and her face stamped with the hardened look of enforced familiarity with crime and degradation; stricken down by the hand of the man who from the first had been her evil genius; whose subtle fascinations, inciting her worst passions, had led her into that downward path, out of which she had found no way, until it brought her to this last bitter end.

Again and again she had begged for mercy and forgiveness, but had never obtained it, from her father. Her birth had been joyously welcomed; its record was standing, handsomely written and yet standing alone, in that elegant Bible whose golden clasps were seldom loosed. Of her death that Bible will contain no record; but another record has been made that neither time nor eternity will efface.

How long Nicodemus Grimshaw stood, there in that den of vice and crime he knew not, with his eyes fixed upon the dead body of his unforgiven daughter. Then finally he roused himself, with a low, shuddering sigh, and turning, groped his way back to the street. No thought of where she would be buried, or how, seemed to take shape in his mind; and there was a look on his face which deterred even the boldest of her depraved companions from bringing that part of the duty created by this sad calamity to his attention. As he had turned his back upon her living, so now he turned his back upon the poor wreck she had left. She had died to him when she left his roof; his name should not be dishonored by giving her the publicity of a Christian burial. She had become common property; let the city take care of her—and it did.

Regaining his home, Nicodemus Grimshaw went to his room and closed and locked the door. Then opening a small closet he took from it a decanter and wine-glass, which he filled and emptied with persistent regularity, until the potion took effect, and wrapped him in the lethargic folds of stupid insensibility.

CHAPTER XXXV.

ONCE MORE SUCCESS.

"Press on; there's no such word as fail;
Ascend the mountain; breast the gale;
Look upward, onward—never fear!
Why should'st thou faint? Heaven smiles above,
Though storm and vapor intervene;
That sun shines on, whose name is Love,
Serenely o'er life's shadowed scene."

—*Park Benjamin.*

"ARE you going try it again, little woman?"

McCready looked down affectionately upon the graceful, girlish form, at the same time detaining her as she was passing through the hall.

Our young heroine's first answer was a look bright and sparkling with undaunted courage. The look that was returned meant:

"Well, go ahead, since it is useless to try to stop you."

Her next answer was:

"Yes, Mr. McCready, I am going to try again, and I am going to keep on trying until my talents, if I have any, find a market somewhere." But the laugh with which this answer was given was not quite so light and joyous as it would have been if entirely free from care.

"Rolina, you are a heroine, and deserve to be immortalized in a book."

"As perhaps I will be, some day."

"But where are you going, this time?" asked McCready.

"I have been told," retorted our heroine with an arch smile, "that it is not legally wrong to conceal the truth from those who have no legal right to know it."

"I concede your legal rights, young lady," said her friend, echoing her playful tone. "But friendship's claims give us the right to many things the law would never grant us."

"I did hope to slip away unnoticed, and escape this inquisition," said Rolina. "But you have hemmed me in, and I must surrender with the best grace I can and let you know that I am just now on my way to an intelligence office."

"Are you crazy, Rolina?"

"Why do you ask me? Crazy people generally maintain most stoutly that they are in their sober senses. But please do not look so horrified. An intelligence office is several degrees above the lock-up—and I was there once, you know."

"And may get there again, if not more careful where you go; but I cannot endure to think of a girl of your culture and refinement being seen huddled into company with such people as come together at those employment offices."

"It is my last resort, Mr. McCready. I have tried every other way that I can think of, and have failed each time."

"But the same difficulty will meet you here as everywhere. They will ask with whom you have lived, and where."

"Then I will have to answer as the little girl did, and tell them I don't *live* at all—I *board*," said Rolina, laughing. "And perhaps I may encounter some physiognomical philanthropist who will consider my

face a sufficient reference as to good character and general excellence."

"I fear your chances in that direction will be slim. Philanthropy, like money, is given most grudgingly to those who need it most. You had better remit your efforts, and rest for awhile. Some desirable opening will come, and in a way you are not looking for. There is luck in waiting, especially if you happen to be in the path where Fortune takes her morning rambles."

"Oh, yes," said Rolina, "but you must get up early and go out and find that path, else the fickle dame will come and go before you get there. I have, as you know, been now out of employment over four months; and money is one of those perishable things that vanish with the using."

"But," said McCready, turning upon his companion a look of earnest and grateful acknowledgment. "You have placed us under obligations that give us a right to ask you to give yourself no thought or care about money so long as we have a single dollar."

"Please do not allude," said Rolina, her eyes brimming with quick-starting tears, "to the little I have done in the way of paying off the incumbrance on your parents' home. The obligations I owe you, my generous friend, for giving me shelter and protection when I had no other friend or home are greater than I can ever repay. I realize and appreciate more and more, every day, the value of the service you rendered me, when, like a guardian angel, you watched every step I took, and guided my feet into that safe and true path which in my youth and inexperience I could not have found. It is a great delight to me to feel that I have been able to do even a little for you in return; but that delight is sadly marred, my friend, when you speak of me as having placed you under the slightest obligation.

Were it possible for me to place a similar estimate on the little I have done, as compared with what has been done for me, I would be guilty of base ingratitude. You can help me more by joining your prayers with mine, that my life may be spared to prove how deep and lasting is the gratitude I feel while cherishing the remembrance of what you have done for me—a remembrance that can never pass away. The blessings of a poor orphan girl shall do what they can to make the path of your coming life bright and joyous. And even in the coming world, in my heavenly home, the remembrance of what you have done for me here, in this, our first commencement life, will, it seems to me, be fresh forever.”

She held his hands for a moment, in a fervent pressure, then glided away, leaving McCready with heart and eyes full to overflowing.

Half an hour later Rolina was sitting in an employment office. It was one of the better regulated of those places where an effort is made to come as near to true order as can be done in a place where the selfish instincts of human nature are continually put to the severest tests.

Our heroine's name and address were asked for and given at the desk, and an admission fee of one dollar was paid, which gave her a right to come and sit there as long as she pleased every day for a month.

“Show Miss Vernon to apartment No. 1,” said the clerk, to a thirteen-year-old attendant.”

The boy started forward with “This way, young woman,” and having conducted our heroine to the right place, his next order was, “Sit down there.”

Don't call that boy rude, and say he should have more manners. His salary is only three dollars a week, out of which he pays for lodging, food and clothing; not much left to pay for good breeding.

“Them that takes manners, pays tuppence more.”

The room to which Rolina was assigned was set apart for the better class of applicants—those who seek employment somewhere within that range of duties that lie just around on the outer verge of respectability, but do not come quite within it. The housework girls are in the next room. They all have their “papers” with them—“characters” they call them, and which they know exactly how and where to get ready-made or made to order.

Rolina spent the day there until 5 o’clock, except the twenty minutes in which she purchased and consumed a frugal lunch at a small bakery around the corner. She did not think it safe to lose the time required for a trip home; she might miss her only opportunity while gone.

There were numerous applications for such services as she could render, and again and again she stood at the bar of patronizing criticism; but the want of that all-important passport to public and private favor—“a character”—was the death blow to her hopes in every case. She was sent back, disgraced, each time, and took the seat that the boy had told her to occupy.

There was no trouble of that sort in the adjoining room, and very little in the room where she was. The references in almost every case were unexceptionable, although the appearance of the applicants was sometimes far from being so.

To about half a dozen philanthropic-looking ladies, Rolina attempted the experiment of giving a true history of her life. Her story of the kind treatment she had received from McCready and his friends produced no worse result than to bring upon her certain suspicious looks. But when she came to the ballad-singing, they invariably motioned her away; and in each in-

stance she noticed that the lady gave her clothing a sudden brush and shake, spontaneous and unintentional, no doubt, but an entirely natural expression of the feeling with which one seeks to ward off contagion.

The setting sun was weaving a long veil of rose and amber clouds to curtain his evening couch when our young heroine left the scene of her day's fruitless efforts. At the utter profitless issue of this her last venture, and upon which she had built hopes of good results, her brave heart failed her, for a time, and she drew down her veil to hide the tears that would have their way, for awhile at least.

"It seems as if I were one too many in the world—no need of me, and no room for me," she murmured sadly; but she added with instant hopefulness, as the cloud sweeping over her black and heavy though it was turned to reveal its silver lining, and the strong faith that had for years been gaining strength in her earnest nature came to her rescue: "I know there is One watching above who does not forget even me, and that His guardian angels are around and near me at all times. The experience of this day has shown me that many others, also, as deserving no doubt, as I am, are sadly in want of comforts, for which they would gladly and faithfully render any honorable service. No, no, I will not falter nor give up. I have a living trust in God, and I have kind and sympathizing friends"—and at that moment there came back to her the remembrance, as if with a stronger appeal than ever, of that forlorn and helpless fellow-creature for whom she had undertaken to provide. She could not and would not for an instant endure the thought of passing him over to the freezing embrace of public charity.

At that moment her faith seemed to reach further up than ever, and to grasp and hold the firm belief that

He whose love and wisdom provide with tender care for every creature, whether good or evil, would yet, in some way, lead her to find and enter upon the work that she was best prepared to do.

Cheered and sustained by these happy thoughts, Rolina brushed aside her tears, and was soon at home. But when removing her wraps she sank wearily down upon a small sofa in the sitting room, a revulsion of feeling came over her once more, and a fresh rain of tears coursed down her cheeks. But a moment later a hand was laid on her shoulder, and she looked up into McCready's kindly face.

"In tears, Rolina?" he said, drawing up a chair. "It is a long time since I have witnessed such a compromise on the part of my indomitable little friend."

"We must be allowed our luxuries once in awhile," our heroine answered, smiling, and brushing away the drops. "This is one of woman's special privileges, you know, although I do not claim it very often. These are not tears of discouragement; but I am exhausted and worn down with exertion and effort that brings, thus far, no results."

"I need not, then, ask for the history of to-day's experiment. But as you have had bad news for me, I am going to return good for evil."

Rolina looked up quickly at the encouraging tone and words.

"You, Mr. McCready? tell me what, please."

McCready smiled fondly down upon his little *protégée*.

"Ah, that brings the old ring back to your voice again. As you made a sensation in the opera line, how would you like to essay the drama?"

"The *drama*, Mr. McCready?"

"Yes, the drama. In a conversation to-day with

Mr. Moore, the manager of — Theater, he incidentally told me that he was preparing to bring out a play which would, as he believed, remove from that old and honored name some of the opprobrium that has gathered around it. He showed me a little gem of a piece, lately written by an author whose name has not yet been given to the public, and of which only a few proof copies have been made. I read it through and am delighted with it. He will bring it out as soon as everything is ready."

"All of which may be of interest to Mr. Moore and the public, also, if they like the play," interposed Rolina a trifle impatiently; "but I fail to see where I come in."

"Where you ought to come in, of course, and where you will find yourself in your true element or I am much mistaken, Rolina," said McCready, his face expressing the satisfaction he felt. "As the bright particular star—the leading genius of the piece—in the title rôle."

"Mr. McCready! it is impossible," exclaimed our heroine, aghast. "You certainly do not expect to fill the most important and conspicuous part with me—a novice, a stranger."

"I intend to offer you for that responsible position, with your ladyship's permission," was the smiling answer. "The part requires clear and deep insight, as well as sympathy and culture, to do it justice, and I believe you are the very person for that character. This opinion I have already expressed to Mr. Moore, and have promised to bring you around to-morrow, with your consent, of course—and let him hear you read some portions of the piece."

Rolina remained silent for three, or perhaps five minutes, her only answer being a slight trembling of her

hand, which was still resting in his clasp. At last she said:

"Without reading or even seeing the piece before I go there?"

"That way will be a more convincing test. As no copies have been given out, he will know that you have never seen the play."

"It may be a convincing test to him, but it will be a severe and unusual one for me."

"Which my little heroine will not flinch from, I am certain. You have read all my standard plays to shreds; and I have always believed that your talents would ere long bring you to the stage and keep you there. Your figure is good, your carriage easy and graceful, and your delivery sweet and sympathetic. You need not blush, little sensitive plant," he added, laying a finger lightly upon her glowing cheek. "I do not often praise you, and this is the simple truth—no flattery in it. It is my firm conviction that the work that is waiting to be done by you is an earnest, faithful, and graphic portrayal upon the stage, of virtue and the rewards it always brings. The histrionic profession is the work to which the strangely checkered events of your life have borne you forward, and in that profession you will make for yourself an honored name. But come, say something, little silent mouse. Don't let me do all the talking."

"I scarcely know what to say," Rolina answered, lifting her shining eyes. "When I left that employment office, an hour ago, it did seem as if every door was closed against me; as if, by having gone upon a public stage, and sung a few simple songs that afforded innocent pleasure and amusement to thousands, I had committed the one unpardonable sin for which forgiveness could never be obtained. As I came out of that

place a chilling sense of utter alienation from human sympathy came over me, and I wept. Then I got the better of it, but only to break down again, as soon as I reached home, which was about a minute before you entered and diverted my tears."

"Which only shows that you have a dear, little, sensitive womanly heart, despite your undaunted pluck and perseverance," said McCready tenderly. "The people of this world are a strange, capricious class of creatures, only a few of whom make any clear and correct discrimination between right and wrong. They give some things to the devil, and set others apart for heaven, and half the time have no idea on what ground or for what reason they make the distinction. Evil is in the abuse and wrong use of the good things that a merciful Creator bestows upon us. Whether the world is filled with virtue, purity and beauty, or with vice, pollution and disorder, depends not so much upon the things we have and use, as upon the way we use them.

"The stage, as well as the press, follows that universal law of trade by which the demand comes first, and the supply comes in to meet it. Those people who would destroy the stage because many of its exhibitions are base and demoralizing, might, with as good reason, throw in the press, and let that go with it. In each case the public get the class of goods they want, and for which they are ready to pay the highest price. In every period of the world, within the written or recorded history of mankind, the drama, in some form, has been one of the most efficient educators of the race, either for good or evil; and thus it will be, long after certain religious teachers, who are vainly trying to destroy the stage by substituting in their churches very inferior theatrical representations shall have passed away and been forgotten. But I am talking right along, as if I

supposed I was telling you something you did not know already. Why don't you tell me to stop?"

"Because I like to hear you," Rolina answered, smiling. "The thought of going on the stage does indeed look to me as if it were something I had often dreamed of; and it may be that I have some talent for that kind of work—how much, however, will be better known after a trial has been made. I am willing to make the effort, if you advise it; and perhaps I may work my way along and up. You said all the characters were in except the central and leading one. Are you in the cast?"

"No. I wish I were, for your sake, that I might be near you; but I shall always be on hand to see you there, and bring you home. Everything around you will be pleasant there. Mr. Moore is a gentleman, and the company, most of whom I saw, and one or two of whom I know personally, impress me very favorably."

"Well, I will try, at all events," said our heroine. "It is the only answer I can give, except that I thank the Lord from my heart, that at this point, when all else failed me, and my way seemed so dark and dreary He has sent this ray of sunshine across my path, by means of you, my best and dearest earthly friend."

In the violet eyes there was a rainbow of mingled tears and smiles, while her face was fervent with grateful love. McCready looked down upon her for a moment, while her clinging hands were fast and warm in his, and her eyes raised to meet those that had ever filled her heart with fullest trust and confidence, and quickened every noble, generous element of her nature. Then withdrawing one hand, he once more caressed the shining wealth of her hair, with a touch tender as a father's.

"I will ask mother to have an early tea, and then do you retire and rest from your day's trials. To-morrow we will start anew, and see what it will bring."

The supper bell gave its summons while he spoke; and at an early hour Rolina retired to rest.

The appointed time the next morning found them at the theater, where McCready introduced his young *protégée* to Mr. Moore, who regarded her graceful figure and attractive face with the eye of a connoisseur. Then placing a copy of the play in her hand, he requested her to read to the middle of the third page. With a single reassuring pressure from McCready's hand, a whispered "courage!" from his lips, Rolina stepped across the stage, and began to read. But she did not stop at the indicated point; her sensitive, poetic nature had caught the true sentiment and pathos of the character; and with heightened color and increasing power, she went on and read the entire scene, when as hearty an applause as two pairs of hands could give rewarded her successful effort.

"Eureka!" Mr. Moore exclaimed enthusiastically, and giving her hand a hearty shake, as she tendered him back the play. "You certainly have found your vocation, Miss Vernon. Your reading of a play that you never saw before, and especially your rendering of the part that will be assigned you, surprises and delights me. Please come this way.

He preceded them into his private office; and an hour later, Rolina and her friend were on their way homeward, their hearts full of bright hopes and prospects.

"Your little tempest-tossed bark is sailing peacefully into port at last, Rolina," said McCready, pressing the slender little hand that rested on his arm.

"Into port, my friend?" said Rolina. "Oh, no;

only on the way there. There may be many a storm and tempest yet, before port is reached. Each step in life, even though taken in the right direction, is but the way and means to gain another and another step. The last and final port is the only one to be looked forward to as a haven of rest and peace. That port is heaven."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

A STROKE OF GOOD FORTUNE.

“This accident and flood of fortune
So far exceed all instance, all discourse,
That I am ready to distrust mine eyes,
And wrangle with my reason, that persuades me
To any other trust.”

—*Shakspeare.*

It was a bright, cheerful morning in one of the early months of the year, and the sun, shining genially in at his window, fell upon the thoughtful face of our artist friend, Scratch, as he bent before his canvas. He worked steadily on until close to 10 o'clock, then laying aside his brush, leaned back for a few minutes, drawing one hand wearily across his forehead.

“Ah, me! this seems like all work and no pay! It's poor encouragement to spend two or three weeks on a picture, and then let it go for half-price, and discover in the meantime that one's obligations have run up to double the sum. I wish some fairy would light on my shoulder, and bring me a commission for a two-hundred-dollar picture, to be finished in a week.”

There came at that moment a gentle tap at his door, and with a comical mixture of hope and expectation on his countenance, Scratch cried briskly “Come in!” but nothing more fairylike made its appearance than the pleasant, motherly face of Mrs. McCready.

“I hope I haven't interrupted you, Mr. Scratch?” be-

gan the good lady apologetically. "I have just been to see our patient in the next room, and thought I would drop in for a few minutes. How are you getting on with your picture?"

"Nicely, thank you," responded Scratch, not at all adverse to a diversion for a few moments. "Only I wish it was as easy to sell my pictures as it is to paint them."

"It does seem too bad that your genius is not more widely known and appreciated," said Mrs. McCready, sympathetically. "I think your pictures are as pretty as can be, and if I were only able, I'd buy them as fast as you could paint them. I hope you will have a stroke of good fortune, before long."

"I am much obliged for your good wishes, Mrs. McCready," said the artist smiling. "The name of some painter of renown is often what sells a picture, although perhaps his brush never touched it. When some millionaire buys one of my pictures and hangs it in his parlor or picture gallery, with my name in the lower left-hand corner, then orders will come fast enough. But please tell me, how is our invalid to-day?"

"Much more quiet to-day, and sleeping very comfortably at present. But it is heart-rending to hear him when his bad turns come on, so piteously appealing and calling for his 'lost ones.' At such times Rolina is the only one who can do anything with him; but under her gentle touch and influence, he soon becomes quiet and tranquil. I have a notion that the lost ones he is calling for are a wife and a daughter; and it may be that Rolina reminds him of his daughter, and in that way is able to exert a beneficial influence over him."

"She exerts a beneficial influence over every one she

has anything to do with!" exclaimed Scratch enthusiastically. "The limit of her generosity and good will is reached only when it is absolutely impossible for her to do anything more for its object. She brought that poor creature home with her, and out of her own hard-earned savings has paid for medical attendance and all expenses; and all out of pure sympathy and compassion, because she knows he is better taken care of here than he would be at any of those asylums—charity hospitals some people call them. If people who are able to aid the destitute and suffering would be their own almoners, either directly and personally, or through persons whom they know and can trust, and over whom they exercise a judicious supervision, the money given to charitable objects would accomplish ten times the good that it does under existing conditions. Instead of the money being largely employed, as it now is, in supporting a horde of sinecures and supernumeraries with their sisters and cousins and aunts, it would go directly to benefit the poor people for whom it is originally designed and donated, and whom it reaches in alarmingly diminished quantities."

"I think you are right about that," said Mrs. McCready. "As for Rolina, she is one of a thousand. I shall never forget the day when she came and placed in my hand the satisfaction of that mortgage, and throwing her arms around my neck told me that everything was clear, and that she had paid the last cent. My husband was so overcome that he cried like a child; and as for James, he just looked at her for a moment, in complete bewilderment, and then the boy sprang up and gave her a hug that frightened me—I thought it would take the breath out of the child. She's the best, dearest girl that ever blessed this earth."

"Yes, indeed," assented Scratch. "And I believe

I must tell you that the money I gave you this morning on my board bill, was slipped into my hand by her. She found out in some way that I was out of money, and came up to me last evening, and placed twenty dollars in my hand, in that quiet, unobtrusive way she has in conferring any good turn. I was very unwilling to take it, and in fact, told her at first that I would not; but it was useless to say any more, when she told me that if I would only consent to let her lend it to me, she would find some way within a week to enable me to repay it. I cannot imagine what she had in her mind, but the mischievous, roguish laugh that she gave, indicated plainly that she had something in view that she believed would be of considerable benefit to me. To do some kind act or service, for some one or more of us, continually, seems to be her very meat and drink; and so sure as any of us attempt to remonstrate with her she raises her serious little face, and reminds us that we gave her a home, protection and care when there was no one else in the wide world to help or pity her, and that if she did not now, when she was able, do everything in her power for us, in return, she would be the most ungrateful girl alive; and in this way she contrives to almost force these benefactions upon us."

"Well, I see we are on a dangerous theme," said Mrs. McCready, smiling, and at the same time rising. "When I begin to talk about Rolina, I don't know where to stop; I forget time and everything else. Good-morning, Mr. Scratch! I hope for your own sake that you may be able to dispose of some of your pictures before long, and that that may lead to further commissions."

"Thank you kindly, good-morning," and Scratch having bowed his landlady out, resumed his painting. He had been working about an hour, when he heard a

heavy tread ascending the stairs, and then came a knock at his door. Springing up, he admitted a stranger, who came in with the air of one who had business in hand.

"Mr. Scratch, I believe?" said the caller, referring to a card in his hand.

"That is my name—at your service," replied the artist, placing a chair at the disposal of his visitor, whom at a second look he recognized, and added: "Mr. Moore, I believe?"

It was not very easy, after that recognition, for the artist to keep his head and heart in their proper relations with each other. He had seen Mr. Moore two or three times, and recollected him as the manager of the theater at which Rolina was engaged. To give an order for a painting was undoubtedly the purpose for which he had called; and if he could only manage to behave with easy professional indifference, all would be right.

Among the many peculiarities discovered in the organic principles of human nature, and thus far unexplained, may be mentioned the fact that the average man confers a favor more freely upon some one who does not appear to care much about it, than upon one who intimates that he knows of no other way to procure his breakfast the next morning.

"I have called to see you," said Mr. Moore. "In regard to painting some scenes for our theater. Miss Vernon has recommended you to me, telling me that you have a good deal of original talent. She thought we ought to have some additional scenery for the new piece we are preparing to bring out, and spoke of your taste and genius, saying also that she believed your orders were not very pressing just at present, and you might be willing to undertake it. If you can spare the

time to do so, suppose you walk around with me now, and take a look at the place."

Our artist friend hesitated a moment, but only just long enough to consider how he should manage to accept the invitation without appearing to be in too great a hurry. Then he said: "Certainly, sir, with pleasure, and ten minutes later they were walking briskly through the street.

"Been engaged at your profession long, friend Scratch?" queried Mr. Moore affably.

"Well not very long; half a dozen years or so."

"And how do you like the profession?"

"My very soul is in it," was the artist's earnest and enthusiastic reply. "When the public takes as much interest in looking at my pictures as I do in painting them, I shall be one of the most fortunate men living."

"That's just the way they all talk," said the manager with a good-humored laugh. "I never yet saw one who would not rather starve by inches than give up his profession. We gave a job last year to a poor devil of an artist who talked just as you do. He died three months after finishing it; killed by too close confinement to his work—a hasty consumption carried him off. Poor fellow! I called to see him five days before he died. He told me he had money enough in the savings bank to pay off everything; and I have no doubt there would have been, if he could have been there himself to settle with those people. Doctors, nurses, and boarding-house keepers would knock off half their bills, sometimes, if confronted by the ghost of the man whose estate they are endeavoring to keep his relatives from squandering by securing as large a share of it as possible themselves. There was only twenty-three dollars left to bury him with, and some of the people who had been with him wanted to gobble that up, but we kept

it from them, and a few of us clubbed together and made up enough more to give him a decent burial. Here we are, Mr. Scratch," he added bringing these pleasant reminiscences to a close as he paused before the theater. "And you can soon see what we want to have done."

A brief inspection and conference, and then came the crisis for which Scratch had been longing, and yet dreading, at the same time.

"Well, Mr. Scratch, how much for the job?"

Scratch had determined to take what he could get, but he did not like to say so. He thought it better and safer to ask:

"How much, Mr. Moore, are you accustomed to pay for a piece of work like this?"

"I suppose one hundred and fifty dollars would be about right," said the manager, blissfully unconscious of the ecstatic leap which the magic words sent to the nerve center of the physical form that stood beside him. "If you suit us we may give you a permanent situation as scenic artist; we are looking for a good hand in that line. Is the sum I have named satisfactory?"

"Well, yes, I think so," said Scratch, trying hard to keep his tone from sounding too triumphantly joyful, as he reflected how he would have accepted half that sum, and thought himself mighty fortunate.

"And can you begin the work to-morrow?"

"I think so. I have a painting on hand that I would like to finish up, but perhaps that can lie over for a few days."

"What, the one I saw on your easel?" asked Moore briskly. "I was quite taken with it. Perhaps I will buy it to hang up in my private office, if it is not already engaged. I will expect you, then, to-morrow morning. Good-day, sir."

A hundred and fifty dollars for a job that could be finished within a fortnight, with a fair prospect of selling the picture already on hand, and also obtaining permanent employment, was more than joy to our impecunious and struggling artist friend. He was not quite certain whether he was awake or dreaming, and hurried home to subject himself to the inspection of Mrs. McCready, with a view of having that important question settled beyond doubt.

Mrs. McCready decided that he was awake, but not quite sane. She thought, however, he would recover in the course of the day, as it was his first attack; and he did.

When Rolina returned that evening Scratch exhausted all the thanking words he had ever learned, and ended by saying that he hoped the next dictionary that came out would give him fully a thousand more.

"I have only kept the promise made for my own convenience," retorted our heroine with a gay laugh; "which was to find you some way to pay me that twenty dollars you were so rebellious about accepting as a loan. That is right, isn't it?"

CHAPTER XXXVII.

A VICTIM OF FASHION.

THE proceedings at the church of Dr. Simpcox closed in a sudden and unlooked-for way.

The doctor and our story seem to fall in each other's way, now and then. On a former occasion he sent away a funeral because the man who had lived in the body for which burial was wanted had been an actor. Again, a bridal party is dismissed, because an officer from the criminal court is in immediate want of the body of the bridegroom. We will give the doctor something to do, ere long, that he can go through with, and finish up.

Back to the house so lately full of animated bustle rolled the two carriages with their unconscious freight. A violent peal brought the startled domestics to the door, and the inanimate burdens were carried in, up through the gayly decorated halls and rooms whose glittering show seemed to mock them: Bessie to the "bride's bower," and Mrs. Ormsby to her own room. Then pale with emotion, Mr. Ormsby, glancing at the startled throng around him, spoke for the first time.

"Some one of you please go immediately for Dr. Ellsworth." But while he spoke a step at the door announced the family physician.

"I was at the church," he said briefly. Then with a few directions to those about him, he passed on to Bessie's room.



BESSIE ORMSBY.

After an interval of anxious, agonizing suspense, a faint tinge glowed on the poor girl's marble cheek—a faint breath fluttered over her rigid lips. Then her dark eyes opened; and as they rested on her father who was bending over her, she attempted to raise her head and speak.

“No, no, my dear,” interposed the doctor, laying his hand upon her forehead. “Take this and give your nerves a chance to become quiet—then you can talk as much as you please.”

Reaching for a tumbler, he held it to her lips. One moment, Bessie's eyes, heavy with grateful tears, rested upon her father's face, while one feeble hand reached for his. Then she took the draught passively, and as Mr. Ormsby bending over pressed a kiss full of tender compassion and love upon her brow her eyes gently closed again.

For some time Mr. Ormsby sat and watched her breathing so quietly; then as his brow grew stern with a sudden recollection, he rose, and leaving the room, sought his wife's apartment. Mrs. Ormsby was lying on a couch, her maid sitting by, and bathing her forehead with *eau de cologne*. The elegant dress, donned with so much pride only a few hours previous, was lying in a crushed and wrinkled heap around her. Her hair, half-unbound swept in disordered waves about her temples, while her flushed cheek and glittering eye still bore witness to the surgings of the tempest that had driven her gayly-rigged bark against a hidden rock.

Mr. Ormsby stood regarding the scene in silence for a moment. Then approaching the sofa, he drew a chair close to his wife and sat down.

“You may leave the room, Helen.”

The maid rose, and with a single apprehensive glance at her mistress, withdrew, while Mr. Ormsby bent over his wife.

"Let me ask, Clara, what right you had to hurry on the marriage of our only daughter and child, in my absence, and without consulting me? Why was this entire matter kept a profound secret from me, until by my absence from home, and the shortness of the intervening time, it could, as you supposed, be hurried through, and my daughter be sent off with that man, without my even being allowed to be present at the ceremony, or bid her farewell? On what plea, social or moral, can you justify or defend that breach of honor—ay, decency?"

Mrs. Ormsby shrank away with a nervous, frightened shudder from the sternly accusing face and voice; then she spoke in a faint, unsteady tone:

"He didn't propose until after you left home, and then you were so full of business I thought I wouldn't bother you. Besides, the management of those matters is generally left to the mother."

"Not wisely left to a mother whose insane worship of fashion and display makes her blind to everything but outward appearances, and renders her unable to distinguish between an English lord and an escaped felon! You have not a shadow of excuse, Clara. Every act and word only condemns you more. You are well aware that no business, however engrossing or important, would keep me away a single hour, if my child's welfare was at stake. The very first impulse of common justice would have shown you that no engagement involving a promise of marriage on the part of our daughter should be made without my knowledge and approval, and that I must be present at her wedding. The poor lamb, shrinking from the sacrifice as from the murderer's knife, and you, a woman and mother, abetting and urging on that heinous crime."

"Oh, *don't* call things by such dreadful names,"

cried Mrs. Ormsby, as each word smote her like a lash. "Everything was so mixed up, I hardly knew where I was or what I was doing. Lord Gordon had to return home at a stated time and he would not hear to deferring the marriage, and Dr. Simpcox said it had better go on; so I yielded to their counsels and wishes. I am very sorry I did."

"*Lord Gordon*," repeated her husband, with an accent of intensified contempt. "But how was it possible, after receiving my last telegram, to let the ceremony go on? Why was not that wicked farce stopped at once?"

Mrs. Ormsby raised herself with a sudden, guilty start. For the first time the remembrance of that neglected telegram returned. Involuntarily she sought the pocket of her dress, and in a moment the missive was in her hand.

"Yes, I did receive it, Oscar!" she faltered. "But——"

"But the absorbing attentions of Colonel Allen, and your mad haste to consummate your ambitious schemes, drove this and every other consideration of duty and honor out of your mind, I see," said Mr. Ormsby, in a tone whose sharp bitterness cut to her heart. "It is not even opened, and I am the first to break the seal of my own message to my wife, and at such a time as this. I answered Bessie's letter by telegram as soon as it reached me, telling you when I would be home. I supposed that message would place an arrest upon your insane folly until I could get here. I was detained by breaks in the road, and other accidents, but was hurrying home with all possible speed, when at 7 o'clock this morning, while waiting for a train at Allentown, I took up a New York paper, and read with surprise and horror that my daughter was to be married to that

bogus lord, at 12 o'clock to-day. Instantly I telegraphed this message"—opening the envelope. "'Stop proceedings; will be home on next train.'"

"But this was nothing to you. In the wild delirium of your desire to marry our daughter to an English lord, and send her off before I could even hold her for the last time in my arms, my telegram was forgotten—not even opened. And now my beloved and only child, the hapless, innocent victim of this wicked conspiracy, this cruel, inhuman outrage, is brought home to die."

"Oh, Oscar! Oscar! *don't* say such dreadful things! It was not willful neglect. All was bustle and confusion when it came—so many calling my attention—I hadn't time to think—to do anything, scarcely! Don't be so cruel, Oscar," she moaned raising her face imploringly. "I thought all was as it should be. I did not know—I could not dream——"

"Had not so much of your time been squandered in foolish, sinful *dreaming*, you would perhaps have been awake; but blinded by empty glitter, and deadened by sycophantic flattery, your eyes and ears were closed to the calls of conscience, reason, and common sense."

"*Don't* talk in that way any more. You'll drive me crazy," Mrs. Ormsby exclaimed, with hysterical vehemence. "Tell me what dreadful thing has happened to Lord Gordon? Why was he arrested?"

The first heat of Mr. Ormsby's indignation and anguish had spent itself, and the old, tender, chivalric feelings were stirring in his heart in behalf of the misguided woman whom for nearly twenty years he had called "wife" and still loved. His voice instinctively softened to a tone of compassion, and as he spoke again, his eyes resting upon her agitated features gleamed with some of the old, kindly light.

"The man calling himself 'Lord Gordon' is an ad-

venturer and a knave. He was valet to an English nobleman, and being discharged for stealing his master's money, contrived soon after to obtain a thousand pounds on a forged draft, cleverly executed, and came over here immediately with his stolen money to lionize himself in New York society. I knew nothing of the fellow's real character until I reached New York, two hours ago; but a single look at the low, cunning physiognomy, obtained at that entertainment you gave, was enough to tell me that he was one of the last men on earth whom I would permit to be the husband of my daughter. I little thought, then, that matters would ever come to this pass.

"His arrest at the church to-day was a matter that I had no intimation about until the officer met and recognized me at the door, and told me what he was about to do. They have had the order for his arrest at the Central Police Office for the last ten days, and they have been shadowing him constantly, ready to arrest him at once if he attempted to leave the city. Prompted by a malicious desire to humble him as much as possible—and perhaps to humble us also, for it looks like it—they allowed him to go on with his wedding preparations, intending to take him at the last moment, from the marriage altar, and consign him to a felon's cell. This, my wife, is the little social game that you have helped to play—for which you have sacrificed the happiness, if not the life, of our only child."

Mrs. Ormsby's face was again buried in the pillow, and her whole body was shaken in another fit of hysterical weeping. This dreadful blow, attacking at once her pride, *caste*, ambition and reputation, was too much to bear—this blow that so completely and irredeemably demolished the idols she had worshipped, went also to her very heart, and it seemed to her in

that dreadful moment that the agonies of death would be easy, and even welcome, compared to this abasement and self-humiliation.

There was a tap at the door at that moment, and Mr. Ormsby rose to answer it.

"What is wanted?" he asked with his hand on the latch.

"If you please, sir, Miss Ormsby has woke up, and wants you," was the low reply.

Leaving the room, Mr. Ormsby was at her side in a moment. She looked like a wilted flower, so fragile and wan, while her fair hair, unbound, covered the pillow in a golden rain.

"Father! dear father!" she held out one thin hand. The loving, yet mournful pathos of her voice brought a rush of tears to her father's eyes, as bending over her, he gathered her in his arms.

"My darling! my precious child!" All the father's deep, concentrated love breathed in his tone, intensified into a mute appeal, that this, his one treasure, might be spared; and as he laid his face to hers, each cheek was wet with the other's tears. Then growing calmer, he drew back, and gazed long and tenderly upon her.

"How does my darling child feel now?" he asked presently.

"A little better. Oh, I am so glad to have you home again, dear father!" She clasped his hand tightly. "You will never leave me any more, will you?"

"Never, my darling! Never again will I leave my unprotected lamb to the mercy of devouring wolves." He spoke with unconscious bitterness, as the remembrance of those cruel events pressed upon his mind.

"It is over now, dear father," Bessie whispered as she passed one hand caressingly over his head. "All

over now, thank God!" and her eyes closed wearily, while tears trickled from their lashes, as there came back to her a vivid realization of the anguish through which she had passed, and the dread *dénouement* she had so narrowly escaped. She lay silent in her father's arms for a few moments; then growing calmer, partly raised herself. "We were all mistaken—we have all suffered. It must be a terrible blow to poor mother. Where is she?"

"I am here," answered a low, agitated voice, and Mrs. Ormsby came from where she had been standing for the last few minutes, just outside of the room, feeling almost as if she had forfeited all right to enter. Taking her daughter's hand she raised it penitently to her lips. But Bessie's gentle heart held no feelings save sympathy and compassion for her mother's sufferings, so plainly portrayed upon her pale, proud face; and opening her arms, she drew her to a tender embrace.

"Don't grieve, dear mother. Better have this revelation come now, just as it did, dreadful as was the shock and disgrace, than later—too late!" And as all the horror of the position into which she had so nearly been forced returned upon her she turned away her head and shook for a moment with a nervous spasm.

"This must not be allowed," said Mr. Ormsby, laying his hand on his wife's arm. "Bessie cannot bear this excitement. The only hope for her recovery is in keeping her perfectly calm and as free as possible from emotion. Leave her with me, Clara."

In silence Mrs. Ormsby obeyed, while her husband gently stroked his daughter's brow, until all traces of the excitement through which she had passed disappeared from her pale face, and she sank once more into peaceful slumber.

For the first few days the physician had strong hopes of his patient's recovery, and Mr. Ormsby's mind was just beginning to relax in a measure from the stretch of anxious solicitude, when, after his morning visit, one day, the doctor beckoned him down to the library, and closed the door.

"It is my sad duty, dear sir, to tell you that there is less ground for the hope I have been holding out to you. The terrible shock your daughter has sustained, and her previous anguish of mind, has so shattered her nervous system as to loosen her hold upon life, and she is like a flower almost severed from the parent stem. I do not even yet say that she cannot recover; but it is my belief that she will survive but a few days longer, unless some very radical and unlooked-for change in her symptoms occurs before that time."

Mr. Ormsby gazed at the doctor like one in a dream; then staggering backward into a chair, covered his face and groaned aloud. He seemed already to hear the funeral bells tolling the death-knell of his only child, so fair, so lovely, so cruelly sacrificed, each stroke bearing the sad refrain—"no hope! no hope!" When he raised his face at last, the doctor, accustomed as he was to all phases of suffering, was startled at its ghastly pallor.

"And must we lose her? must Death, from whom we fondly hoped we had won her back, come and claim her so soon—so cruelly soon? Oh, I cannot give up my only child! Is there no way—nothing that can be done? Let all else go, if need be, but spare me this one, best-loved treasure."

"Would to God it were in my power, Mr. Ormsby, but I see little, in fact nothing, to rest a hope upon. Her present condition and symptoms show that she has suffered mentally and physically more than any one of

her extremely sensitive nervous organization can long endure, and live. There has been a gradual failing—imperceptible, perhaps, to casual observers—and this last, terrible shock has sufficed to snap the thread held so long by a feeble tenure. She is not, I think, entirely unprepared for the approaching change. That intuition that comes at such times to almost every one has admonished her that she may soon enter upon another, higher form of life; and she would probably hear with little regret or sorrow, that the hour is drawing near.”

“All that you say, doctor, is no doubt true; and yet it is inexpressibly sad to think that this precious gift from heaven should be wrested from me as a tribute to fashion and society!” came hoarsely from the father’s lips. “Are these the victims that the altar of Fashion demands?”

“Calm yourself, for her sake, dear sir,” said the doctor gently. “Let not her last moments be embittered by the sight of lamentations which she cannot assuage, but rather let her last hours on earth be brightened by calm and loving ministrations, until she passes over into the arms of those who stand ready to meet her in another world, and who, with tender solicitude and care, will supply every want of her real life, and will be better prepared to do so, because not disturbed by a knowledge or remembrance of what she has suffered here.” And with a kind pressure of his hand, the doctor left him.

With an anguish too deep for tears, and which words are inadequate to describe, Mr. Ormsby watched the flickering lamp of his daughter’s life as day by day it burned lower and lower; while the mother, her heart torn with grief, remorse, and bitter self-reproach, saw and realized the deadly, unerring effect and potency of the poison her own hand had administered, until at

last the dread summons came—that summons which, however long delayed, always comes too soon. With one faint “farewell” one hand clasping each of theirs, the white lids closed for the last time over those violet eyes, and the shrinking mother, the heart-broken father, stood in the presence of death. One look Mrs. Ormsby cast upon the pale lifeless face, and then she was carried from the room in a swoon.

In the center of the long drawing room of Mr. Ormsby’s elegant residence stood a massive burial casket, supported by trestles, and half-covered by the heavy velvet pall that swept to the floor. In that casket reposed all that was mortal of Bessie Ormsby.

By the side of the casket, bowed in the very abandonment of anguish, knelt the unhappy mother; while at the head, his arms folded over his breast, his countenance rigid, his gaze riveted upon the dead as though to imprint it indelibly upon his memory, stood Mr. Ormsby. The pained, anxious look had disappeared from the face of the sleeper, and over the sweet features, though wasted, there had settled an expression of peace and rest. For a long time Mr. Ormsby stood there in silence; then the pent-up bitterness and grief of his soul broke forth.

“Here lies a victim of fashion and vain ambition. The dearest daughter that ever blessed a father’s home, sacrificed, consigned to an early grave, heart crushed and broken, to gratify an unhallowed insane desire for empty, ostentatious show!”

A deep groan interrupted him. With her woefully haggard face upraised, Mrs. Ormsby extended one hand in piteous entreaty.

“Oscar, I have sinned! but, oh, do not reproach me now, in this sad hour, when my heart is breaking.

Tell me if there is anything that I can do to prove that I am penitent. Impose upon me any duty, however severe, and I will perform it."

For a moment Mr. Ormsby was silent. Then a spasm crossed his face.

"Do this, then. Return at once all letters and gifts received from Colonel Allen, and in one line say to him that Mrs. Ormsby does not desire to see or hear from him again."

Mrs. Ormsby rose tottering to her feet, and turning upon her husband a half-bewildered look, answered:

"Oscar, I will do that gladly, now, at once; that is no punishment. But is there nothing more that I can do? Is there no way for me to obtain forgiveness—to find my way back to my husband's regard? Oh, Oscar! if you could only realize the utter hopeless anguish that is pressing down my very life, now that my mind is opening to a realization of the dread and terrible truth that my own folly and imprudence have deprived us of our darling child. Have you no pity, no compassion for a mother whose heart is bleeding at every pore? That child was as dear to me as to you. I may not have loved her so wisely, but I loved her as well; while on my poor heart is placed the additional, unsupportable weight of sorrow that comes from knowing that you believe, perhaps justly, that I am responsible for her death."

She turned to leave the room, at the same time casting upon her husband one last, imploring look. The ghastly pallor of her face, and the hopeless agony it expressed, not only touched but reached and entered Mr. Ormsby's heart.

"Clara! my dear wife;" were the only words he uttered, but he opened his arms wide, and the next moment she was sobbing on his breast. Then she knew

she was forgiven. "God forbid, my dear wife," said Mr. Ormsby, when the paroxysm had subsided in a measure, "that I, an erring mortal, should condemn you, whom I have loved so long—my own dear wife! The stern verdict of truth, however severely it may condemn us, does not place us beyond the reach of our Heavenly Father's love and mercy. Let us look to Him."

Supporting her trembling form in his arms, Mr. Ormsby led his wife forward, and together they knelt by the side of the casket in which reposed the lifeless body of their only child. Then and there, in the presence of Him who sees all hearts, they plighted anew their marriage vows.

The errors and follies of that repentant wife, and the sad consequences that followed from them, were never, after that moment, mentioned by her husband. Through that severe and terrible discipline, she was brought nearer to her husband's heart than she had ever been before. He did not tell her that he forgave her; that would have implied that she had done something for which he had a right to withhold his forgiveness. The vows of that new marriage were registered in heaven and they were kept. The obligations then and there assumed brought their hearts so near together that no way was left by which any thought or feeling could come in to sever them.

When at last they rose from kneeling by the side of that lifeless body, and Mrs. Ormsby was again moving away from her husband, it was not with tottering steps, as if bearing a load of guilt for which there was no forgiveness or comfort. There was one long embrace, one fervent, tender kiss—full of heartfelt contrition on her part, of loving sympathy on his—then gently disengaging herself, Mrs. Ormsby went to her room.

An hour later a special messenger carried to the lodgings of Colonel Allen a package bearing his address. "No answer," was written on the outside; and as the gallant colonel received it, he knew that the conquest upon which he had been in anticipation pluming himself, was from that hour relegated to the things "that might have been," but for which Mrs. Ormsby might from henceforth with sincere and thankful heart, "praise God that they were not."

A large company filled the Ormsby parlors two days later to take a final look at the young bride-elect, whose life had gone out in so sad a tragedy; but the gay, debonnair face and graceful form of Colonel Allen was conspicuous by its absence. Two days later Mrs. Ormsby received indirectly the news that he had sailed for Europe, in all probability never to return.

Dr. Simpcox officiated at the funeral of Bessie Ormsby, and on that occasion went through and finished up his work—a work which his own unwise counsels and advice had aided in bringing to his hand. On the following Sunday he learned from his junior warden that a sale of the Ormsby pew had been ordered. The visit of condolence, which custom and kindness required the doctor to make to the Ormsby family, was delayed from day to day, and finally forgotten.

Perhaps it is not out of place to mention that sometimes when Mrs. Ormsby was entirely alone her thoughts would wander off and bring up the remembrance of things that she did not even like to think of in the presence of her husband. At such times her mind would take a silent and solemn review of the dark labyrinth along which she had permitted a stranger's hand to lead her, and she would shrink back in horror at the thought of what the end might have been, had she not been aroused from the deadly stupor of that

almost fatal fascination by the startling and terrible event which a merciful Providence permitted to fall across her path, and arrest her downward course.

Humbled in spirit, realizing her own weakness, and bowing for the first time in many years in penitent, private prayer, Mrs. Ormsby took up her life anew, dedicating the remainder of it, whatever it might be, to the conscientious, faithful fulfillment of those obligations that are entered into by every woman who assumes the sacred vows of marriage. And when, two years after Bessie's death, another little daughter blessed their home, she hailed the gift with a thankful and chastened heart, realizing the true nature of her duties and responsibilities toward it, and pledging herself to be a faithful mother, guide, and mentor to that new pledge of love and hope.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

FROM DARKNESS TO LIGHT.

“My brain, methinks, is like an hourglass,
Wherein my imaginations run like sands,
Filling up time; but then are turn'd and turn'd,
So that I know not what to stay upon,
And less to put in art.”

—Jonson.

AN unusual silence and quietude pervaded Mrs. McCready's modest dwelling. Occasionally a cautious step would pass along the hall to or from an apartment at the farther end. With this exception all was still.

For many weeks the strange being for whom the compassion of our heroine, Rolina Vernon, had provided a haven of rest, had been tossing upon his bed in wild delirium. A crisis had now been reached, and reason must soon return, or its light go out forever.

“I have strong hopes of his recovery,” the physician had said, as he took leave of Mrs. McCready the evening before. “But the issue rests with a higher Power, and we must wait with faith and patience.”

This was that next day, and the doctor with the other anxious friends, had gathered in the patient's room. The physician sat by the bedside, while McCready, his mother and Rolina stood at some distance away, but with their gaze rivetted upon the patient.

“He is slumbering quietly now, and must on no account be disturbed,” said the doctor, not in a whis-

per, but in that low tone that physicians know how to use, making themselves distinctly heard, without disturbing patients who are so nervous and restless that they would be instantly awakened by a whisper.

An hour went wearily by while that deep slumber still held the unconscious invalid as though the hand of a mighty spell was on him. Finally, however, the doctor drew a deep breath, as his patient stirred, and after a moment opened his eyes and fixed them upon his friends, with the intelligent, inquiring, yet half-bewildered look of one about to ask:

“Where am I, and what does all this mean?”

For a moment he sustained himself in his half-raised position, then sinking back, laid one thin hand on that of the physician.

“What has happened?” he asked. “Have I been ill? and am I among friends at last?”

“The best and kindest of friends,” the doctor answered, pressing his hand gently. Then turning to the radiant faces around him, he added: “Perhaps the most of you better leave the room for awhile. Miss Rolina may remain to assist me, and I will let you know when it is advisable to come in. Our patient must be kept as quiet as possible for some time yet.”

McCready and his mother withdrew at once, while Rolina, drawing a small ottoman to the side of the bed, rested her face against the coverlet, and wept quiet but grateful tears. With a few reassuring words to his patient, the doctor administered a soothing draught, and the invalid soon sank into a quiet natural slumber.

Some three weeks had passed, the patient gaining health and strength every day, his mind at the same time appearing to take in more and more of the scenes around him, and his memory also occasionally catching and bringing up events that had happened some years

before. He was well enough now to leave his room for short intervals, and it was determined to bring him for the first time to the supper table with the family. Rolina claimed the right to provide at her own expense a festive repast for that occasion, and the board around which they gathered was spread with a liberal hand.

The evening meal was over, and the happy group had gathered around the cheerful fire, when the invalid, who had been resting his brow upon his hand in silent thought, looked wistfully up at Rolina, who was seated a short distance from him.

"My little friend," he said, "come and sit close to me and let me talk with you."

Wondering, yet acquiescent, Rolina came forward and took a seat at his side, when taking one of her hands, he gazed in her face long and earnestly.

"My dear," he said at last, "you remind me of a little girl that I once knew and loved. She was my own dear child, and only a child when I last saw her. I cannot remember how long ago that was, and yet perhaps I can, if you will tell me what year this is."

McCready gave the answer, at the same time accompanied by a look, the meaning of which Rolina caught at once, admonishing her to keep as quiet as possible, and let their friend simply follow the thread of his own awakening recollections.

"What!" he exclaimed in surprise. "And where are the years that have passed since I left my dear wife and child in the spring of 1861? How strange!" he added, with a look so startling that every eye was riveted on him, and all regarded him with breathless suspense. Rolina would have spoken, but McCready placed a warning finger on his lips, and looking at the invalid said in a tone of quiet encouragement:

"Well, dear sir, we are all interested. Tell us more."

"I don't know what to tell you," was the embarrassed answer. "Here all seems natural enough, and some of you look as if I had seen you before. But when I try to think of the past, I seem to be looking at a dark mist that I cannot pierce. You tell me I have been sick a long time. Have I been crazy also?"

"Not quite in your right mind, sometimes, dear friend," was Rolina's guarded answer. She felt as if she must say something.

"Well, my little friend," he said, turning upon her that serious and earnest look that the sound of her voice never failed to bring to his face. "I am not crazy now; I know what I am talking about. Please tell me who you are, where you were born, and what was your mother's name?"

The question was promptly answered, the invalid bending forward and regarding her with the most intense interest and attention; then a thrilling cry broke from his lips in a burst of uncontrollable joy and triumph:

"My child! my child! Thank God I have found my child!" and in another moment he was almost crushing her against his breast, while the tears rolled down his cheeks.

All was consternation, the first impression being that the poor man's insanity had returned in fuller power than ever; and McCready and Scratch sprang forward to extricate Rolina from what they feared was a madman's grasp.

Divining their intention, however, the invalid put out one hand deprecatingly.

"No, no!" he said earnestly, but more quietly. "I am not crazy now, whatever I may have been. This

is my daughter, Rolina Maude Vernon; her mother was my wife."

He loosened his impetuous clasp, and pale with emotion, white to the very lips, Rolina gazed into his animated face, a gentle whisper seeming at the same time to stir through her heart; "This is your father!" and yet conviction would not come in a moment, nor without further proof; and she forced herself to say, while at the same time more than half convinced that her words would meet an overwhelming refutation.

"You cannot be my father. My father died on the battlefield. I can remember how my mother used to say to me, 'Your papa is in heaven.' And Aunt Sophia Pringle, with whom I lived after my mother died, always told me that my father was killed in the war."

The invalid said no more for a moment, but with a strange, wondering look, in which joy, sorrow, and delight were mingled, drew from his bosom a small locket, and springing it apart, revealed on one side the gentle features of his wife, and on the other a faithful likeness of his little daughter, as she looked when he left her. The recognition was complete.

"This," he said, after it had been passed around, "has been preserved to me through all my wanderings and adversities, by that merciful Providence who had decreed that I should once more be reunited to my child—my own daughter!"

"God forgive me!" said Rolina. "For doubting for an instant the truth of what you declared. My father—my own precious father! Oh, how good God was to let me find you and bring you here to my own home," and she fell into his outstretched arms, and to use the beautiful language of Scripture, "wept upon his neck a

good while." Then Mrs. McCready and the other friends crowded around to add their congratulations to the joyous reunion. And McCready laying one hand that trembled with emotion upon Rolina's bowed head, added with fervent feeling. "God bless you, my dear little friend! The joy of this moment is enough to pay for a whole lifetime of sorrow, and is almost reward enough even for you."

Full and complete mutual recognition having been thus established beyond a shadow of uncertainty or doubt, Rolina again took a seat by her father's side, and rested her head on his shoulder, while he briefly related the story of his being reported among the killed while he had in reality been taken prisoner. Then as memory came back at each step to aid him, he related his final escape from prison, where he must have spent two years or more, and how he succeeded in working his way back to New York, only to find himself once more incarcerated in what he afterward knew was a lunatic asylum, and of his first escape from that place. He remembered and described his recapture, his subsequent escape, and his first visit to Grimshaw's residence, together with the substance of the interview.

"I can remember," he went on, "that all that sad, dark time, there was an impression on my mind that I had a treasure somewhere; and it seems to me now, as if I must have been kept alive by the hope that I should find that treasure. The name of Nicodemus Grimshaw was bound up with that impression, and it seemed to me as if he were in some way accountable for my trouble. After that first time when I found my way to his presence, I roamed around for months, scarcely knowing what I was thinking, and yet with a yearning desire to find my jewels, as I called them. Finally I went to Grimshaw's again, and met

you there. I remember how tenderly you spoke, and that there settled upon my troubled mind at once a sense of security and peace. I remember how willingly and gladly I came with you," he added, his voice trembling, "and how ever since you have given me home, food, raiment, and tender nursing—and now with the blessing of restored reason, comes the greater blessing of my daughter found and restored to my arms."

The deep pathos of his words brought tears to every eye, while Rolina again threw herself upon his breast in a burst of happy weeping. Never more need she say that she was alone in the world. Surrounded by loving friends and a devoted father, whom her outstretched hand of mercy, her tender, loving and self-sacrificing ministrations had thus brought from darkness to light—ay, from death unto life—she felt that she was indeed richly blest.

At a late hour that night the happy family retired to rest, and surely angel wings fanned them as they slumbered; for upon the faces of each and all rested a tranquil joy, like unto "that peace which passeth understanding."

On the morning following this joyful revelation and reunion, Rolina was standing on the stage of the theater at which she had lately succeeded in securing a position for McCready, and for whom she was now waiting to rehearse with her the rôle of "Romeo and Juliet," which was shortly to be produced; but for some unknown cause he did not appear at the appointed time. After waiting a few moments, the manager called for a rehearsal of the afterpiece, while Rolina remained, leaning against some of the scenery, watching the actors, and wondering what could have detained her friend. So absorbed had she become with that thought

that she did not notice any one approaching her, until a voice fell upon her ear that caused her to turn with a sudden start.

"Your *Romeo* is tardy to-day, Miss Vernon. He surely does not mean to disappoint us?"

Rolina turned her eyes with quiet dignity upon the speaker. He was a newcomer, and from the moment of his introduction to the company she had regarded him with instinctive aversion. She did not wish to appear rude, or excite his animosity unnecessarily, but thus far had studiously avoided him. He, on the contrary, had from the first manifested an ardent admiration for her, and of late his attentions had grown so assiduous and pointed that she began to feel seriously annoyed and perplexed. When, therefore, she saw him close beside her, and noticed that no one else was in that immediate vicinity, she experienced for a moment an unpleasant nervous thrill; but soon recovering her presence of mind, she answered quietly:

"He will not disappoint us, Mr. Morris. He is, no doubt, unavoidably detained. I expect him every moment."

"If he doesn't put in an appearance pretty soon, I will ask the stage manager to allow me the honor of acting as his substitute this time. I am perfectly familiar with the rôle."

"That will not be necessary," Rolina answered coolly. "We will either wait for Mr. McCready, or else postpone the rehearsal."

Morris edged a step nearer, still regarding her intently. "Come now," he said persuasively. "Would you not like to play to my *Romeo*? I would make a most devoted lover, I assure you."

"No, sir. I would rather be excused," Rolina answered, drawing away.

"Then if you will not listen to me as *Romeo*, you will, I hope, as Charley Morris, which will please me much better," persisted her admirer, laying his hand lightly but firmly on her arm. "You know that I admire—yes, love you. The most costly and beautiful of the floral tributes that have been thrown at your feet always came from my hand. I have been seeking in vain an opportunity to speak to you, and declare my sentiments. I resolved to become a temporary member of this company for that purpose alone, and I have found it at last. I am no fourth-rate supernumerary, as you may have supposed. I have a fortune and a brilliant position in society; and although my family would never listen to my forming an alliance with an actress, yet for your sake I would defy them. Of course our attachment would have to remain a profound secret from every one; but we can be happy in our own way, you know, and you shall live in luxury all your life."

"Is that all?" said our heroine, with the coolness of a banker about to decline a note offered for discount, and not willing to injure either his own feelings or that of the applicant.

Rolina, as the reader will remember, had had some experience in the way of proffered attentions which she had seen fit to decline, and like a sensible young woman she had profited by them.

On this occasion the advantages were all on her side. There was help within call if she should happen to need it, and she felt inclined to repose firmly on her dignity, and not waste on that silly fellow any of the feeling that would soon be needed in the rehearsal.

"I don't quite understand you," said Mr. Morris, considerably crestfallen. "I am not only making a declaration of love to you, but I am even willing to

marry you, if you insist upon it, provided, of course, that our marriage must on no account be known to my friends or the public. You certainly cannot fail to realize, Miss Vernon, that this is an unusual condescension on my part—a man of fortune and high social position, consenting to marry an actress who has neither the one nor the other, and simply because I love you, my dear.”

Again he attempted to place his hand on her arm, but she quietly and coolly repulsed him. Rolina thought that to see what a fool a man could make of himself was worth the few moments of time she was spending; but she did not intend to be compromised for an instant by any act permitted from him or any word spoken by herself.

“I am very sorry, Mr. Morris, that you took the trouble to join the company on my account,” she said with the utmost composure. “I am certain I would never have done so much as that for you.” And seeing McCready come in at that moment, our heroine bade her ardent and venturesome lover a good-morning and left him.

The rehearsal passed off in a satisfactory way and *Romeo* led his *Juliet* to the dressing room and handed her a chair.

“Now sit down and rest for a few moments, little woman, you look tired and excited. I have just a word or two to say to Williams before we leave,” he said in a tone of kindly protection with which he always instinctively addressed his young friend.

“How strange it is,” Rolina said half-dreamily, as she sat there alone, “that the one man in all the world whose declaration of love for me would fill my heart with the purest joy, does not, up to this moment, so far as I can see, even suspect that it is in his power to make me the happiest woman living. At the same

time I would lose his respect forever, long and well as I have known him, and dearly as he loves me as a friend, if by any word or act I were to let him know what I would give the world to have him discover in any other way than by being compelled to disclose it myself."

But by the strange irony of fate, our young heroine, despite her modesty and reserve, was at that very moment precipitating the crisis she deplored; for, as the last words left her lips, McCready's form darkened the doorway; but as she was sitting some little way in the room, and with her back toward the door, and McCready's step for some reason was unusually light, she was not aware of his approach.

But on the actor's handsome face there was an expression of one from whose eyes the scales have suddenly fallen, revealing a prospect fair and lovely beyond his most ardent dreams. For a moment his heart stood almost still, then gave a sudden, impetuous bound, that sent the hot blood rushing tumultuously to his cheek, as for the first time he realized the deep, intense love those words had awakened. His impulsive temperament was fired at once. He took a hasty step into the little room, and the next moment was sitting beside Rolina, with both her hands warmly clasped in his.

"Rolina," the strong voice trembled with man's best emotion. "I did not mean to play eavesdropper, darling—but I have heard what has brought me, also, from darkness to light—a light so beautiful, so fair, that I hardly dared believe my own great good fortune—that the same dear little hand which led another to the light of reason, happiness and such joyful recognition, should have opened also for me the door to the most perfect joy it is vouchsafed mortals to experience. Let me hear again those sweet words that tell me that I am loved, even as I have loved, for years."

A rosy flush, but more of joy than of embarrassment overspread Rolina's face, and for a moment her tongue failed her.

"Just a little word, Rolina, darling," urged McCready. "Do I indeed own your heart? Yes, or no?"

"Why do you ask me? You have stolen my answer before I gave it—before it was even asked for." Then raising her head bravely, she gazed with her clear, loving eyes straight into his own.

McCready carried the little hand he was holding to his lips.

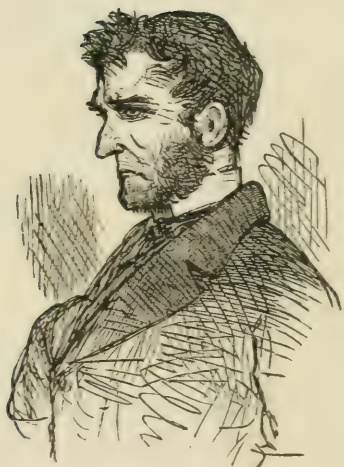
"And when may I call you all my own, darling?"

"Please do not ask me that," her eyes dropped away from his earnest, ardent gaze. "I cannot answer that question so soon."

"Nor will I be too selfishly importunate. You shall have your own time. Heaven bless my treasure!"

"Oh, how good you are," Rolina exclaimed, and impulsively throwing her arms around his neck, she raised her lips to meet his, parted with such a loving, chivalrous smile. Then drawing back, half-abashed, she added with that simplicity that graced all her actions:

"Take me home, now, please, Mr. McCready."



NICODEMUS GRIMSHAW.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

VERNON VS. GRIMSHAW.

SOME three months after his full restoration to health and reason, Mr. Vernon was sitting alone with his daughter one evening, trying to listen to what she was saying, but with another thought lying back in his mind that concerned him more, and prevented him from giving her his whole attention. Finally, taking advantage of a favorable moment, he said :

“Rolina, my dear child, there is a subject on which I for some time have desired to speak with you, and I do not want to delay doing so any longer. I do not like to see you continue in the profession which I suppose you have taken up because you found no other way to get a livelihood. It is true it has not only furnished you a comfortable support, but through the mysterious leadings of that Providence which has so wisely and yet so strangely watched over and guided all your actions it has enabled you to bring back your father from death to life. To me you seem a living miracle, and I almost dread to say anything that shall look like expressing a desire to have you leave a profession in which you seem to take so deep an interest. But our circumstances are likely soon to change, and what may have been a necessity heretofore, will not, I hope, be so much longer. You know, my child, what the kind old lawyer on William Street told us the other morning. That agreement made between Grimshaw and

myself, before I left for the war, and so happily preserved and restored to me by the Safe Deposit Company, holds him, as the lawyer tells us, to a strict account for every dollar of my interest in the business. He must show exactly what has been done with everything. The dishonest tricks he resorted to, in pretending to break up and start again, will afford him no help in the way of escaping this responsibility. At the time of his pretended failure he criminally concealed the fact that half of everything was mine. Some time may elapse before we get any part of what is justly ours, but it must come. And the motive that urges me more strongly than any other to get this money as soon as possible, is that I may in this way, be able to relieve you from the oppressive cares and labors to which your life has hitherto been devoted."

Rolina listened to her father with attentive interest, then drawing closer to him, and laying her hand on his arm, she said:

"What you say, dear father, in regard to your claims on Mr. Grimshaw seems all right to me. I did not understand the matter until that talk with our lawyer, and I was even fearful that an attempt to get anything from him would be only sending good money after bad. I knew from what you had told me that he had not only defrauded my dear mother, and driven her away to perish, but was now keeping a large amount of money that justly belongs to you; but I had very little hope of our being able to get any part of it, until Mr. Forsythe, after looking over our papers, and hearing your statement, offered to undertake the case without any retaining fee, and would expect for their services only a small percentage on the amount recovered. You will no doubt recover a handsome sum from Mr. Grimshaw, and I will do all I can to help you get it. We must

be just and kind to every one, whether good or bad; but it is not just or kind to let any man keep money obtained by fraud, if, by the help of the civil law, we can take it from him."

"So far then, my dear child, your sympathies are with me," said Mr. Vernon, smiling. "But shall I infer that if we get that money, and you have all you need to make you comfortable, you will still desire to continue upon the stage?"

"That is exactly what I mean, dear father," said Rolina earnestly. "And I am sure that when you see this matter as it looks to me, you will be entirely willing to have me continue in that profession. I know, of course, that in consequence of the spurious and immoral representations that are palmed off upon the public, the drama is regarded by many as a school of vice, and nothing more; and it is no doubt true that there are many bad people among the lower class of actors—for such representations cannot fail to have an evil and demoralizing influence in both directions—upon those who enact, and those who witness them. For much of this evil, the very persons who indulge in this wholesale condemnation are themselves responsible. By their presence and patronage they sustain and encourage these improper representations, and then turn away and say how demoralizing these things are."

"That is no doubt true, my child," said Mr. Vernon thoughtfully. "But is it not better to wait until the stage attains that higher standard, and is prepared to reflect credit and honor upon those who adopt it as a profession?"

"And would not that, dear father, be too much like the Pharisee and Levite? Shall we turn away and pass by on the other side, and leave this noble art to perish, or wait until some good Samaritan comes to save it,

because it has fallen among thieves, who have wounded it and left it half-dead? Rather, I would say, let every man and woman who feels the inspiration of true, histrionic genius rally to the rescue, and lend a helping hand to raise it to its true position, and restore it to its right and proper place among the educators of the human race.

“Should a man take no part in political affairs, but let his country go to ruin, and excuse himself for doing so on the ground that he finds the ranks already filled with unprincipled demagogues and schemers, whose only end and purpose is to advance their own selfish interests? Should he not rather throw himself into the breach, and take an active and efficient part toward the establishment of true order, even though in contending for what is just and right he may be obliged to enter the arena with the worst and most unscrupulous men as his antagonists?

“My limited experience has taught me, dear father, that radical evils and perversions enter as far as possible into everything, and are found everywhere. The ministry, which is, or should be, a sacred calling, has its full share; and yet, because some men, or even many, who have taken upon themselves the solemn vows of ordination, profane those vows and prostitute that calling, trading upon the position and influence thus secured to obtain their own mercenary and selfish purposes, shall we therefore close our churches, and denounce all who occupy our pulpits as hypocrites and hirelings? renounce all religion? Rather let us learn to distinguish between those who teach genuine truth, and those whose religious teachings consist merely in flowery rhetoric and sensational bombast. Let us turn away from worshipping men as idols, and worship the true and living God, and Him alone, and support a

ministry whose teachings shall be true and genuine, and in harmony with the revealed Word of God.

“There are other things besides the drama that need reforming. Although falling far below what it should be, it is by no means lost, and it will yet live to realize and carry out its true design and mission.”

“There is much truth and force in what you present so eloquently, my dear child,” said Mr. Vernon, regarding the animated girl with fond pride. “But there are few, I fear, who view the matter in that light, or care to bestow much time or effort upon the work of reforming either the pulpit or the stage. Your remarks bring back to me some views and thoughts that were in my mind in those other years that seem to me like another life from which the interval of death has separated me. I remember thinking and saying in those other days, or in that other, former life, if I may call it so, that the fulminations in which some preachers indulged against the drama, seemed to me to be inspired by a fear lest the stage by a better and truer acting, would draw away their patronage. In other words, there seemed to be a rivalry between the pulpit and the stage and rather more on the part of the former than the latter, and perhaps some reason for it.”

“I am glad to see the thoughts of those other days coming back to you, dear father,” said Rolina, affectionately stroking his hand. “And I hope they will and you in realizing that your daughter in doing what she can to give the drama its true and proper character and form, is on a noble and useful mission. The drama, as an institution, dates back as far as history has any records; and what has endured so long, must have in it the leaven of good and use. That this is so, in the case of the drama, must, as it seems to me, be evident to every reflecting and observing mind. The

most effective mode of presenting any truth, is by what is called object teaching. The most popular and successful preachers are those who know how to draw the most vivid word pictures to convince, attract, or warn, and who can infuse into their exhortations the largest measure of the true dramatic element. What is the life of a good man or a good woman, but a living drama? It has been said, and truly, that history is philosophy teaching by example; and how much more effective and valuable that example must be, when events that would fill a volume are placed before the eye and mind in a condensed and crystallized representation of a single evening. Plays that foster and encourage evil are evil *per se*, and need no argument to condemn them. But the evil is in the plays, and in the persons who enact and thus perpetuate them, and not in the art itself, but in its perversion to a disorderly purpose.

“A store or other building used as a depot for immoral literature is very properly shunned by every virtuous and right-minded person. But let the same place be devoted to some good and orderly use, and its character is changed; it is no longer shunned as a plague spot. The bad associations may remain for a short time, but they soon pass away and are forgotten. The drama is simply a representative form of virtue and vice, in which words and acts and scenic representations are combined, to teach in the most effective way some good or evil lesson. What is wanted is to rescue this important educational agency from the perverted and evil uses to which it has been devoted so largely, and bring it into the service of what is good, orderly, true and pure.

“Mr. Moore is doing a good work, father, in keeping his stage free from any play that can have an evil or

even a doubtful tendency; and his constantly increasing patronage is an evidence that the work he is doing is appreciated. I feel that I have a special fitness for this profession and that I have a mission to perform in and through it—a work that I can do honorably and well. Mr. McCready and I have been admitted into Christian fellowship and communion with a church that does not hesitate to recognize us as members; and they treat us in a way that assures us that, in their estimation, at least, we are, by the work we are doing in our profession, making for ourselves an honorable and worthy record. They do not believe that the theatrical representations are among the works that belong exclusively to the world, the flesh and the devil.”

“Thereby proving their faith by their works,” said her father warmly. “But the labor, my dear—is not the tax too severe upon you?”

“No, father. It is no task for me to memorize; and I feel happy in the consciousness that I am performing a real and genuine use in the world—am helping to erect a standard of pure morals to which many will be turned. Every good work that is undertaken calls for good and honest hearts and hands to carry it forward in the right direction. The influence of the press for evil as well as for good is, as every one knows, as wide as civilization itself; and yet no sane man ever thinks of abolishing the Press, in order to prevent the evil that is done through that channel. That evil does not come from the Press, but from the abuse of human freedom, which cannot be entirely prevented without turning men into beasts or something worse.

“The same principle applies to the Drama, which will continue to be one of the most effective educators, either in a right or in a wrong direction. As for myself, dear father, I can assure you, that when going upon

the stage to enact any character, I am always in the spirit of earnest prayer that the words I repeat, and the representations I give, may appeal to and influence the people before me, that their feelings and aspirations may be turned to a better, purer and higher life. It seems to me that the highest object that can be aimed at by the angels themselves is to do all that can be done in the way of restoring God's gifts to their proper and appointed use to His creatures, for whom He has made nothing in vain. And if I can do something in this direction, however little it may be, I shall feel that my reward is in my work, and that I am richly blessed.

"The Drama, dear father, is one of the three leading agencies in shaping the lives and morals of our people. The time will come when the Drama and the Press, not as they now are, but as they will be—will stand by the Pulpit as Aaron and Hur stood by Moses, when they held up the hands of the man of God, so that his enemies might not prevail; and His divine blessing will rest upon and consecrate the agencies thus employed."

Rolina's mind was so full of this subject that she would have talked right on till now, had not her father interrupted her by saying:

"Well, my dear daughter, you have made a noble and eloquent plea for the drama, and as your heart is so firmly set on that work, I will make no further efforts to turn you away from it, whether you need the money obtained in that way or not. May God speed you in your good work!

"But I have something to do in quite another direction. I want you to go with me to Mr. Grimshaw's residence to-morrow morning. However bad he may be, we must treat him with the utmost courtesy, and with the greatest possible kindness. It is not our mission to punish him. He will find some way to get all

the punishment he needs to prevent him from doing any real mischief to any one but himself.”

“Well, I will be ready to accompany you to-morrow, dear father,” said Rolina. Then rising from her seat, she bent over him for an affectionate kiss, and then left the room.

“Was not the treasure I have found worth looking after, even through all those dark and lonely years?” said Mr. Vernon to his hostess, who entered at the same moment.

“Indeed she is a treasure,” acquiesced Mrs. McCready. “She is a human sunbeam, throwing its gladdening rays on everything around.”

“I have undergone something of a metamorphosis since my last visit to Grimshaw,” Mr. Vernon remarked to his daughter, as they were on their way to that gentleman’s residence the following morning. “But I think he will remember me this time.”

Reaching the merchant’s house, they were conducted up the stairs to his room after some little parley with the servant. Nicodemus Grimshaw sat in his arm-chair, with his head bent forward upon his hand, as was his invariable custom when in the seclusion of his home. As his visitors entered he looked up; then with a quick, startled color flushing his whole face, he rose unsteadily to his feet.

“Who—who are you?” he cried. “Have you come to haunt me again?”

“I am John Vernon, and you know it, Nicodemus Grimshaw,” was the quiet reply.

“John Vernon!” gasped the merchant. “He has been dead these fifteen years.”

“Then he has risen from the dead, for he stands here now before you, and not as he did a year ago, a poor,

muttering lunatic, but in his right mind, thank God! I have come, Nicodemus Grimshaw, to request you to furnish me at your earliest convenience a complete statement in regard to the business of N. Grimshaw & Co., in which I was a full partner at the time I enlisted in 1861, and am a full partner now."

"What? What? And who is she?" demanded Grimshaw, gazing at Rolina, and beginning to experience an impression that he had met that girl at least once before.

"My daughter, Rolina," said John Vernon. "The living image, as you can see, of that dear wife whom you promised to protect and care for until I returned, but sent out into the cold world to die as soon as you heard that I had fallen in battle."

Silence followed for a moment. Then pushing his chair suddenly back, and facing his visitors with the energy and determination of a man who felt that he had important business on hand, Mr. Grimshaw said in a firm, cool tone:

"Well, sir, I am disposed to admit that you are John Vernon, but I am not aware that you have any business with me. The N. Grimshaw & Co., in which you were a partner, failed soon after you enlisted; and in regard to the place on which I held a mortgage, everything was satisfactorily arranged with your wife. I wish you and your daughter good-morning—am glad to see you both well," and again Mr. Grimshaw bowed a bowing-out bow, while the iceberg sphere that was gathering around him grew firmer and harder than ever.

"I am willing to withdraw from the firm of N. Grimshaw & Co.," said Mr. Vernon. "And my interest in the business can be had for much less than it is really worth."

The party who knows he holds a winning hand can afford to keep cool; while he who has nothing but bluff to depend on must try some other way, for the freezing treatment doesn't succeed.

Grimshaw suddenly sprang from his chair, and brought his right foot down upon the floor with a thundering stamp.

"Swindler, blackmailer, go!" he foamed.

"This call was prompted by kindness to you, Mr. Grimshaw," said his visitor, quite unmoved. "But I now leave you in the hands of my attorneys, Messrs. Forsythe & Edson." And he placed a card on the table.

The entrance of the hangman could scarcely have startled the old miser more than the sight of that bit of pasteboard. That old lawyer, Forsythe, and his young partner Edson, had by some fatal mischance stood in Grimshaw's way on several previous occasions, and each time his path had been blocked.

A chill went to his heart. A moment before he had been livid with impotent rage; now terror and consternation were added. Could it be possible that Vernon had found or retained his copy of that old agreement, and placed it in the hands of those lawyers? The quiet, self-sustained manner of his old risen-from-the-dead partner, showed plainly that he knew or supposed he knew on what ground he was standing.

"Good-morning, Mr. Grimshaw," repeated John Vernon, at the same time turning to leave.

"John Vernon," said Grimshaw in the tone of one completely at bay, "have you a duplicate copy of our agreement?"

"My attorneys have it," was the reply.

"For what sum are you willing to release your alleged interest in the business—whatever that interest may be?"

"Mr. Grimshaw," said his late partner. "That question would have been answered without hesitation ten minutes ago. Now it is too late. When you ordered me from your house, you placed an insurmountable obstacle in the way of any further personal negotiations between us. I have now referred you to my attorneys, and shall leave you in their hands. Good-day."

"Go!" snarled Grimshaw, in an excess of defiant desperation. "Go and do your worst!" And he sank back again in his chair, while his visitors left the room.

The next day Mr. Grimshaw received from Forsythe & Edson a formal demand for a full recognition of their client's right as an equal partner in the business; also a detailed statement of every transaction affecting his interests. Grimshaw showed the letter to his lawyer, who took some days to consider and then advised a firm and defiant policy.

"They are demanding," he said, "all that the court would give them, even if we made no defence. They have a hard case on their hands. That failure of yours was cleverly managed, and may enable us to throw out John Vernon entirely. Let them go on and show their hand, and when the right time comes we will ask them what they will take for a full release of the pretended claims of their client."

The time for asking that question soon came, and Mr. Rossiter's letter brought back the reply that they were not disposed to entertain or consider a compromise in any form. The lawyer took the answer to his client, who read it over three or four times, and then said with a heavy groan:

"You must get me out of this trouble, Rossiter, or it will kill me."

"The validity of that failure will be our only de-

fense," said the lawyer. "If they get that set aside, we may as well prepare for the worst."

"You—Rossiter, are the last man who should show any weakness in regard to that transaction," said Grimshaw. "You carried me through that failure, and assured me that every point was carefully guarded."

"So it was, except that I made no provision for a dead man's coming to life," retorted Rossiter with a careless laugh in which his principal did not join him. To him the joke had a grim look.

The case came on in a few weeks, and for once the law did credit to itself, cutting a stroke as clean as if cleft with a Turkish scimeter. Rossiter did what he could for his client; but the attempt to rest the defence on the old trick of the failure was a still worse failure. The court granted an order for the books of the firm to be carefully examined, and three experts were kept busy on them ten days.

The verdict was simply an order of the court, defining John Vernon's position as an equal partner, his indebtedness having been cancelled by Grimshaw's sale of the property on which the mortgage was given. It was a terrible blow to the man with whom fraud and chicanery, with Rossiter's help, had appeared to have their own way in almost every case hitherto.

One very curious incident occurred in the course of the trial. The plaintiff's junior counsel, Mr. Edson, was taken suddenly ill, and Mr. Forsythe requested a young man by the name of Hastings to go up and attend to the suit, at the same time giving him all the instructions required.

It seems impossible, on many occasions, to account for certain curious coincidences in any other way than by admitting that the events of this world are directed by an unseen hand, and that that hand is guided by an in-

telligence that knows exactly what springs to touch, and at what moment. Mr. Hastings, by chance, as we would say, although there could have been no chance about it, was brought into this case; and soon after entering the courtroom, his attention was attracted to the countenance of the beautiful young lady who came in and took a seat by the side of his client—his daughter, evidently.

When and where had he seen that face? What circumstance had happened that led to a half-formed impression that he had on some former occasion seen that young lady in antagonistic relations to the defendant in this suit?

Another case was occupying the attention of the court, and while endeavoring to solve that riddle, Mr. Hastings became aware that the young lady was regarding him with a look certainly of grateful recognition. He, therefore, felt justified in asking Mr. Vernon for an introduction to his daughter; and advanced toward him for that purpose. But Rolina did not wait for any unnecessary formalities, but extending her own hand as soon as he came close enough, said:

"I met you, Mr. Hastings, on an occasion when you appeared for the defense of a young girl charged by Mr. Grimshaw with making an assault on one of his clerks."

"So you did," Mr. Hastings exclaimed as the recognition became complete. "And would there be any objection, Miss Vernon, to my bringing that circumstance to the notice of the court, with a view of still further illustrating the character of the defendant?"

Rolina hesitated a moment, then bowed assent.

Accordingly Mr. Hastings managed to introduce and relate the occurrence already familiar to the reader, and with startling effect. Grimshaw cringed, and gathered himself in as if each stroke of the lash cut to the bone.

No one save two knew or even suspected that the little girl whom Grimshaw had thus endeavored to crush and destroy was then in the courtroom. But Mr. Hastings closed by saying:

"The child thus treated by the defendant is now present in the person of Miss Rolina Vernon, the daughter of the plaintiff in this action."

Grimshaw gave an involuntary start, and looked as if that stroke of the lash had cut through the bone and gone to the marrow. John Vernon at the same moment clasped his daughter in a fervent embrace, without thinking or caring how many were looking on.

The details of the case as given to the public from day to day had a withering and blasting effect on the reputation of Nicodemus Grimshaw, from which it was evident he could never recover. His name was dropped at once from out the list of prospective nominees for congress; and men who had been accustomed to swear on the name of Nicodemus Grimshaw now remarked to each other as they met on the corners:

"I always suspected that old Grimshaw was a fraud."

On the day the case closed, the once prosperous and unscrupulous merchant looked as if his life was half gone. The knife that had cut from his fortune the piece that belonged to John Vernon had passed very near to the heart, and as Grimshaw's heart was there also, it quivered, trembled, and shrunk from the stroke.

"Please send me your check to-morrow for five hundred dollars on account, Mr. Grimshaw," Mr. Rossiter remarked to his client as they were leaving the courtroom, at the close of the trial. "I shall have occasion to use the money."

"So shall I," retorted Grimshaw, in a coarse growl, as he turned on his heel and walked off.

The expression of the defeated merchant was almost deathlike as he slowly wended his way homeward that afternoon. Every one marked his withered appearance. Some pitied, others cursed him.

"A clear case of apoplexy and a bad one," was the doctor's verdict on leaving the patient's residence the following day. "I have been looking for something of this sort. His recovery is scarcely possible."

His prediction proved correct. Occasionally the sick man would appear to be conscious for a short time, and would be heard to say something in an incoherent way about Jones, Arabella, or John Vernon. Once only he looked around in an intelligent way, and asked if any one could tell him what had become of Arabella's little daughter.

No one could give him any information in regard to the child. Then the old man groaned deeply and said:

"Oh, how sad! Find the child, if possible, and let her have what property I leave, after Vernon gets his share."

Nicodemus Grimshaw left no will, but his verbal instructions were followed, because they accorded with what the law was ready to do. He died on the morning of the sixth day after the close of the trial.

His grandchild, Arabella Grimshaw Jones, was found in charge of a poor woman who had taken the helpless little creature home immediately after the murder and suicide that had left her an orphan.

She is a bright, promising little girl now, and is in the care of those whose earnest effort will be to keep her feet from the path that brought to her downfall and ruin that mother who is only a faint memory in her thoughts, surrounded by whatever of good could be told of her, and with the mantle of charity and silence thrown over her failings.

CHAPTER XL.

THE GUARDIAN ANGEL.

"Oh woman! lovely woman! nature made you
To temper man; we had been brutes without you.
Angels are painted fair to look like you:
There's in you all that we believe of heaven:
Amazing brightness, purity and truth,
Eternal joy, and everlasting love."

—*Ottway.*

"You appear to be very busy, Mr. Brown," said Rolina, casting a wistful glance at a half-filled page of foolscap at the top of which she noticed a number that required three figures. "You must be getting off a very long story this time."

Rolina had stepped into the scribe's room to hand him one of half a dozen complimentary tickets to an operatic entertainment brought in by the letter carrier a moment before. "To-morrow evening, I see," said Brown, glancing at the ticket. "You and Mr. McCready will be off duty, and will go, I presume. Well, I will go if I can spare the time, and I am much obliged to you, Miss Rolina. But here comes in a difficulty at the outset. The card says: 'Admit a gentleman and two ladies.' Suppose I have no lady with me—can I get in?"

"What nonsense, Mr. Brown! Will a gallon measure hold half a pint? But why not take a couple of ladies with you?"

"Reduce the order to half that number, and it will be one more than the circle of my visiting acquaintances includes at this present time."

"I am happily enabled to remedy that distressing state of affairs immediately," said our heroine, with a gay laugh. "I will provide you with an introductory card to a young lady friend of mine, who will be much pleased to accept your escort, your good behavior being vouched for by me. But," she continued, with another furtive look at the manuscript, "I have been accused several times, lately, of doing more for my friends than they do for me, and I am not disposed to render myself liable to a repetition of that charge. The price of that introduction, Mr. Brown, is your permission to read as much as I please of the story you are writing."

"Your terms are easy and I accept them," said Brown; and in two minutes more, the introductory card, written right then and there, had been placed with the ticket, and both were safe in his pocket.

"And now," said Rolina, holding out her hand. "I will run over the first few chapters of your story, and call for the rest when I need it."

"I have a little knowledge of law," said Brown with a look of quiet defiance. "And I am pleased to inform you, young lady, that when the time for fulfilling a contract is not stipulated in the instrument, the court supplies the omission by appointing a reasonable time—which in this case would undoubtedly be after my story is finished and printed."

"Mr. Brown you are an unmitigated fraud!" exclaimed Rolina with mock indignation. "I have often been told that men are perverse creatures, filled with guile, but my stock of adjectives would fail to do justice to such treachery as I have just witnessed in one

whom I had hitherto supposed incapable of doing anything wrong. I shall now leave you and your conscience to settle that matter between you, but with some fears, however, that your conscience will fare no better than I have done. Tea will be ready before very long, when you will be able, I hope, to descend for a short time from the airy fancies your imagination is creating to the more substantial realities that Mrs. McCready provides."

At the tea table Rolina made a full exposition of the treacherous conduct of Mr. Brown, and followed with a long plea which she considered ought to secure a unanimous verdict in her favor. All were silent for a few moments, and then McCready said:

"Well, my dear, a man who goes into court with himself as his lawyer generally loses his case. Sympathy does a good deal for a lady sometimes, but is apt to do less than usual when she is so manifestly on the wrong side," and no one joined more heartily than our heroine in the laugh that followed at her expense.

But it was not in the nature of our little friend to let go of any purpose so easily, and as she was on her way to the theater with McCready that evening she said suddenly:

"What do you suppose Mr. Brown has been writing upon so diligently during the last few weeks?"

"Really, my dear Rolina, I haven't even tried to imagine," was his answer. "And I cannot say that I have felt any very absorbing curiosity concerning the matter. An unwillingness to make any effort a subject of conversation before it is culminated is by no means peculiar to our friend Brown. I never knew any one who had more than a certain little friend of mine has of that secretiveness which says: 'Let me alone until I am ready to tell you.'"

"Well, perhaps I have been too inquisitive," said Rolina, feeling that there was just a shade of reproach in what her lover had said. "But I have an impression, I cannot tell why, that what Mr. Brown is writing this time will be of some special interest to me. Do thoughts come from impressions?"

"Impressions," replied McCready, "is a name we give to the first form of thoughts that come into our minds from some source that we are unable to trace. They are not generally reliable, and it is never safe to place very much confidence in them. A true thought should not be ashamed to tell where it comes from."

"What you say may be true enough as a general rule," said Rolina. "But my impressions have not often deceived me, and with your permission I will reserve the right to believe that Mr. Brown is getting up something that will prove to be of more than ordinary interest."

While Rolina and McCready were thus intermingling their conjectures and philosophical conclusions, our friend Brown was bending over his manuscript, scratching away harder than ever, and in this way he continued to write three days and nights more.

It is said to be almost impossible to form an adequate conception, unless from experience, of the agonizing suspense often endured by a writer who has not yet succeeded in making for himself a name in the world, but who toils right on, year after year, following the beckoning of a hope that refuses to be quenched or die. How unlike those authors, and somewhat abundant, just now, whose orders for copy at a dollar a line, are booked five years ahead. The honor of being the possessor of one of their works, even though the leaves have never been cut is often considerably more than would be awarded to the reader of a hundred ordinary volumes.

Mr. Brown braced himself for a bold adventure. With his roll of manuscript in his hand, he brought himself into the presence of the manager of the theater where his friends, Rolina Vernon and J. B. McCready, were engaged.

"Well, sir?" said the manager, in a tone and manner that meant: "Please state your business as briefly as possible." Mr. Brown took the hint and proceeded.

"I have been writing a play, sir, which I propose to dedicate to your star, Miss Rolina Vernon. I would like to leave the manuscript with you to look over."

"Certainly, sir," said Mr. Moore, pleased with the frank but modest address of his visitor. "Are you acquainted with Miss Vernon?" he added and then without waiting for an answer, continued: "By the way, you have not given me your name."

That omission was promptly supplied, and the author proceeded to state that he had been acquainted with the young actress for several years, and had the good fortune to esteem her one of his friends.

"A noble girl, sir," said the manager. "And a rare genius. I will examine this manuscript, and you may call again in a few days—say a week from to-morrow. In the meantime I would like to show it to Miss Vernon"—but observing a hesitating expression on the face of his visitor, he added: "Would you prefer not to have her see it until you have learned my opinion in regard to it?"

"I would be much pleased," said Mr. Brown, "to have you submit it to Miss Vernon, were it not that she would know the writing at a glance, and I wish to keep the authorship a secret from her for awhile."

"Oh, that is easily arranged," said the manager affably. "I will put it into the hands of a copyist who will give me a complete transcript in a couple of days

I suppose the poor fellow will work right on night and day, in order to get his ten dollars as soon as he can. But you better give us a little more time to examine the piece. Let me see—this is the ninth; suppose you call on the nineteenth—ten days. Please call about 11 o'clock. Good-day, sir."

Brown bowed himself out, then bowed to his own thoughts, and was in the humor of bowing to every one and everything else. Could it be possible that his ship so long looked for was coming into port at last, well laden and safe?

The nineteenth came in on time; but Mr. Brown would have thought it came much sooner if it had brought the maturity of a note which he had no money to meet.

"Good-morning, Mr. Brown," said the manager. "I am pleased to see you. We all like the piece you have prepared for us. Did I understand you that this is your first effort in that direction?"

"It is my first attempt to write a play of any sort. My pen has been contributing to the amusement or disgust of the public in some way almost ever since I can remember."

"Well, sir, you certainly have struck it this time. Miss Vernon is delighted with the whole plan and arrangement of the play. It has also been read and examined by a critic whom I consider inferior to no one in the city, and whose approval is always given with great caution. I have not seen him since he read it, but he says in a note received an hour since:

"The play is a good one. I would, however, with the author's permission, suggest a few slight changes.' I would like to have you call on him, Mr. Brown, and see what he has to propose. Here is his address," handing the scribe a card—"no other introduction will

be needed. And now to business. Of course you are aware, my young friend, that you have virtually thrown yourself on my generosity; and you shall have no reason to regret it. I shall offer you more for your work than I would have given had you evinced a disposition to drive a sharp bargain. I am willing to pay you fifty dollars for each performance, until you receive fifteen hundred dollars, and twenty-five dollars on each subsequent performance, also one-half of all royalties for the use of the play by other parties."

A look of gratitude, with about half enough moisture in his eyes to make a couple of tears, was all the answer the young author returned, and all the manager needed.

"Here is a small sum, which please receive on account," said Mr. Moore, as he filled and handed over a check for five hundred dollars. "I am very much pleased, sir, with the play, and am confident that it will have a good run with Miss Vernon as the central point of attraction, supplemented by the company we have. And by the way, there is a prominent part which Mr. McCready is exactly suited to fill; just wait a few moments longer, and I will call in your friends. They are now in the adjoining room, having just finished rehearsal."

He left the room, and in a moment more, the door opened to admit the young actress and her lover.

"Mr. Brown," Rolina exclaimed, gazing at her friend for an instant with a half-bewildered stare. Then came an exclamation of delight, followed by a hearty laugh, in which all joined.

"Now I know what you were writing, and yet how strange that in reading this beautiful play, and wondering from what familiar spirit it came, I did not think of you for an instant. Well, Mr. Brown, you have done your part, and done it handsomely. I will try to do mine."

"The Guardian Angel," as Brown's drama was called, more than justified the strongest hopes of its friends. It became the feature of the season; its announcement, coupled with the names of Mlle. Rolina Vernon and J. Brutus McCready, never failing to fill the house; and Brown woke up at last to the delightful and exhilarating realization that he was a genius.

CHAPTER XLI.

FROM THE STAGE TO THE ALTAR.

“So fare thee well, and may th’ indulgent gods
 grant thee every wish
 Thy soul can form. Once more, farewell!”

—*Sophocles.*

“JANE, tell my daughter I would like to see her, here in the library,” said Mr. Vernon, addressing a servant who had answered the call of his bell.

“Well, father?” said Rolina, as she entered, in answer to the summons, which was so much a matter of course that it awakened no thought of anything of more than usual importance. But a second glance at the serious, thoughtful countenance of her father gave her a different impression. She drew a chair to his side, and slipping her hand into his, said:

“You look serious, father. Your expression is one of earnest solicitude about something.”

“Yes, my dear child,” replied Mr. Vernon. “I have been thinking a good deal, lately, on a subject which I would like to talk with you about, but do not feel that I have a right to do so without your consent. I am aware that you understood me to say some time ago that I would make no further effort to turn you aside from your chosen profession; and that promise is binding unless you are willing to release me from it.”

“Which I do, father, most cheerfully, so far as to allow and even desire you to say whatever you think

best; you at the same time leaving me in freedom to consider and decide as may seem best to me."

"Certainly, my child. I have no desire to influence your action, except so far as I may be able to do so by convincing you that what I propose is best for us all."

If Mr. Vernon could have looked into his daughter's secret thoughts, at that moment, he would have seen that for some weeks she had been silently cherishing a desire that somebody would convince her that it would soon be best for her to retire from public life, and devote her energies to the domestic cares and duties which would require her whole time and attention. She had expressed this desire to McCready, and they had been mutually aiding each other in coming to the same conclusion to which her father was now preparing to bring her, if he could. The task he was taking in hand would therefore be accomplished more easily than he had supposed.

"Since our former conversation on this subject, my dear child," continued Mr. Vernon, "much greater changes in our circumstances have occurred than any of us at that time had even dreamed of. The amount of my interest in Grimshaw's business and estate, as confirmed to me by the court, is more than four times as much as I then supposed it would be, and more than five times as much as I would have consented to take on that morning when you and I called on him. This house, refitted and put in order, inside and out, grounds and all, under your own direction, is now ours, except the life interest which has been secured to little Arabella Grimshaw Jones, through her guardian, and which can be cancelled at any time on the payment of ten thousand dollars."

A sudden pressure of his daughter's hand on his arm indicated to Mr. Vernon that she would like to interrupt him for a moment, and he said smiling:

“Well, Rolina, what is it?”

“I was thinking, father,” said Rolina, “that we ought to appoint for little Bell the room that her mother occupied when she lived here and this was her home. How delighted the dear little creature was the other day when the woman who has charge of her brought her here at my request, and I took her all through the house. When she went into her mother’s room she ran around and looked at everything, and exclaimed with so much delight—‘pretty! pretty!’ Almost everything in that room remains just as poor Arabella left it. I caught up the dear child and kissed her, and she threw her little arms around my neck so lovingly. At that moment I said in my heart: ‘This little creature shall never want a home while I have one.’”

“I am more than willing, my dear,” said Mr. Vernon. “Let little Bell have the room and see that she is well taken care of.”

This little diversion led Mr. Vernon to think that the task of convincing his daughter that the time was at hand when it would be best for her to retire from the stage was already half-done. Instead of rallying to the defense of the position she had formerly assumed, and maintaining that her chosen and favorite profession must be the work of her life, her thoughts were running off to consider the welfare of a little orphan girl whom she desired to bring into her household. But as she had not yet formally intimated her acquiescence with his views, he determined to go right on and convince her, if she needed convincing, that the care of a large house, even though her family might not be very large for some time, would afford her all the dramatic acting she would be able to get through with in a satisfactory way. While his thoughts were thus

arranging themselves and preparing to come down into words, Rolina, suddenly breaking into a merry laugh, said:

"Do you remember, father, how meanly Mr. Brown treated me some time ago, in refusing to tell me what he was writing, after I had kept my part of the contract in giving him an introductory note to my friend, Miss Laura Baker?"

"If the introduction to the young lady has not damaged him any more than what he was writing damaged you, my daughter, I don't see that much mischief has resulted on either side," retorted her father, laughing, and coming to the conclusion that he would not expend much more logic in trying to bring his daughter down from the stage, until he ascertained just how much would be required.

"I have been thinking lately, father," continued Rolina, "that men who, like Mr. Brown and Mr. Scratch, give their whole time and thoughts to some profession or business by which they are trying to get a start in the world, and scarcely notice ladies, except in the way of a civil word now and then, are at the same time quietly watching to seize the first one who suits them, as soon as they see any way to give her a comfortable home. Mr. Brown is actually engaged to my friend Laura. They are to be married in about six months, and will reside in Blissburgh. Mr. Brown has bought the McCready place for four thousand dollars—the one that poor Mr. Grimshaw did not happen to get for six hundred. It is really a delightful little place, father."

"But the old folks—James' parents?" queried Mr. Vernon, with a quizzical look which, however, his daughter did not see.

"Oh, they will live here with us," said Rolina. "At

all events, I hope so. I would not know how to get along without 'mother' who is so soon to be my mother indeed, and who has been like a dear and faithful mother to me so long. You are willing to have them live with us, are you not, dear father?"

"Certainly, my dear child," assented Mr. Vernon cordially.

"And that other good friend of mine, Mr. Scratch, is to be married some time within the course of the coming year to a young lady whom I have never seen, but I hear her well spoken of, and I have seen some of her work. She paints beautifully. She will be at our wedding entertainment."

At this moment Mr. Vernon happened to recollect a remark an elder of a country church had made to him when he was a young man.

"John," the elder had said. "There is nothing in the world easier than to convince a woman who has already made up her mind to be convinced; and nothing harder than to convince one who has not done so."

He knew every well, now, that the pleasant incidents with which his daughter was entertaining him were merely thrown in for the purpose of delaying for a few moments an acknowledgment that she had already decided to retire from the stage.

Any one who is now or ever has been a woman will remember in the mental processes through which she has run a constitutional unwillingness to come down too suddenly from a position that has on former occasions been assumed and defended. "I would like to ask you, my dear daughter," said Mr. Vernon, breaking the short silence that followed Rolina's last bit of gossip," to run your eye over the advertising columns of the morning papers, and see if you notice any one applying for the position of confidential clerk, or

business manager. I would like to find some reliable man whom I can engage in that capacity, to represent me in the business of Grimshaw & Vernon, and perhaps if he suits me I will give him an interest. I would, of course, offer that post to Mr. McCready in preference to any one else, and in his case, give him an interest in the business at once; but in carrying out your programme of devoting your life to the drama, it would be necessary for you to visit the principal cities of the world, and you will of course have your husband with you—you cannot leave him here to help me. My attorneys think that the name of Grimshaw should be retained, in accordance with a commercial custom for which legal provision is made; but my own name will be added, and perhaps the full title will be: 'Grimshaw, Vernon & Co.' ”

Rolina turned upon her father a firm earnest look. There was a twinkle in his eye, the meaning of which could not be misunderstood. She had come honestly by that secretive but playful humor that formed so large an element in her own character.

“My dear father,” she exclaimed, throwing her arms around him. “I have hesitated a little to tell you that James and I have already made up our minds that it would be best for me and for him also to retire from the stage. The logic of events, which is more irresistible than any logic of words, has brought us to that conclusion; but I wanted to hear what you would say, before telling you so. That profession has afforded me the deepest interest and delight. My work has been done not from any feeling of necessity, but *con amore*. Now, however, I fully realize that any attempts to continue in the profession would be incompatible with the other duties I am about to perform. I do not now see how I could have thrown my whole soul into the

drama in the manner I have, unless I had regarded it as the permanent work of my life; and I abate nothing of the high estimate in which I have held and still hold the histrionic profession. But the duties I owe to you, my dear father, and to others, and Mr. McCready's duties to his parents, and our united aid in taking care of the property which a merciful Providence has placed in your hands—all these things combine to show me that another and very different sphere of life is opening before me. My present engagement will terminate with three more appearances, and it will not be renewed. My last appearance will be a farewell benefit. The entire proceeds, by agreement of all parties, will be devoted to charitable objects. I hope, dear father, that some people, at least, and especially those who are true and sincere, will believe that I retire from the stage not because I can live without the money obtained from that source, but because the circumstances under which I am placed clearly show that the path of duty leads in another direction."

The farewell benefit was an ovation indeed. The announcement that Mlle. Rolina Vernon would appear on the boards for the last time, in the popular representation of "The Guardian Angel," and that she would then retire from the stage, and would be married in the course of the following month, would have filled the house, even though half the people had supposed that the public would be treated to a similar announcement slightly modified, before the end of the year.

But when the still better reason was given, and it was known to be true, that the father of the popular young actress had by a sudden and mysterious turn of the wheel of fortune come into possession of a large estate, the whole of which would be hers, the talismanic key to popular sympathy was touched. Every-

body and everybody else was there in full array, and the floral tributes descended in showers.

The expanse that divides the professional life from the private life of the same individual is often a very wide one.

The man who essays to take a public and prominent part in the great drama of life, must play his part, whatever it may be, in the way and manner required by the character he assumes, and if he cannot do so he better retire and let some one else take his place. His withdrawal is always desirable whenever he does not enter with his affection and life into the part he has attempted to enact.

The secret of the success of our young heroine was in the fact that she was deeply and thoroughly in earnest in whatever she did. Whether treading the boards with the air and dignity of a queen, or sitting in the quiet home circle by the side of the father whom she had found and brought from death back to life, she was the same earnest, sincere, impulsive, loving little woman.

When she represented a character on the stage, she entered into the representation and made it her own, and the beholder saw it not as an unmeaning pantomime, but as a living reality. In her last appearance on the stage, enacting the play that elicited unbounded applause, the audience often lost sight of the actress as a creature of mortal mold and form, and imagined they were observing the acts and listening to the words of the veritable guardian angel herself.

But the reader is waiting to see our heroine enter another sphere of life, under cover of which we must permit her to disappear from our view.

Some one has said, or at least might have said, that

the times when angels come nearest are at birth, marriage and death; and yet the remark would have some what of a random character if it were designed to apply to all those alliances to which the sacred name of marriage is given.

In the case of the marriage of our friends Rolina Vernon and James B. McCready, however, angels certainly should have been present. All the circumstances invited them, and there is no reason to suppose that they did not avail themselves of the opportunity thus afforded.

We do not suppose that on ordinary occasions angels take any special interest in the peculiar cut, figure and finish of a bridal trousseau, or care whether it came from Paris or Naples; but we have too high an opinion of them to suppose for a instant that they could fail to feel a deep interest in the fact that the bridal robes in which Rolina was arrayed on that occasion, as well as the clusters of pearls that nestled in her soft hair and on her snowy neck and arms, were the gift of a father whom the very force and attractiveness of her own self-sacrificing life had brought up from that dark valley over which the shadows of death had hung so long.

And must they not also have felt interested in observing that the chosen companion of her coming life, on whose strong arm she was now leaning, was one who although tried through years of want, privation, and unrequited effort and toil, had never shown himself wanting in any one element of goodness, probity, and upright, honorable manhood—the man who was now receiving every earthly reward that could be desired, and some rewards that take hold on heaven, through her whom he had rescued and saved when she had no other friend or protector.

Do not angels delight in coming near to and observ-

ing affairs of this sort? They surely do, and would, if they were even no better than the better class of the men and women in this world.

It had been arranged that the marriage ceremony should take place in that same little church around the corner from whose portals they had not been turned away when asking for some one who would read the last solemn words of consecration over the mortal remains of the man who had gone to his rest from the garret home which they had shared with him at the time.

The bridal party were met at the church by a full and strong delegation from the theatrical companies. The male members of the profession formed a guard of honor, in double columns, extending from the carriage almost to the altar; and as the bride with her attendants passed between them, each with his hat raised, threw a bouquet of flowers at her feet, literally covering the already carpeted ground with another carpet of flowers.

The wedding march that pealed forth from the organ, the solemn and impressive service, and the placing of the golden circlet that sealed and confirmed the marriage vow, and other things that filled in and filled out the ceremonies at the church, need no formal description.

We will, however, look in upon them for a few minutes after the bridal party return to the elegant residence of the bride's father. To the luxurious banquet spread on that occasion, or to any similar one, the reader could do ample justice, without any special or personal assistance from us.

The interchanges of thought and sentiment that were brought out and left in the memories of those who were there, to be looked at again and again, as long as

memory endures, are better deserving of notice and record.

Even the place itself seemed like the consummation of poetic justice—the old Grimshaw mansion, now the home of John Vernon—the place from which he had three times been driven—now open to receive a joyous and happy company assembled to greet him and his beloved daughter on the day of her marriage.

How often we witness events which no human foresight could have arranged or provided, but which plainly indicate that they have been brought together and placed in that relation by special design, and are intended to warn and instruct or guide and sustain us.

The old saying, “time makes all things even,” has passed into a proverb and is often repeated. It is not quite true, however. Time needs to be supplemented by eternity sometimes, and yet that law does seem to make a constant effort to vindicate its truth, without waiting for eternity to assist in that vindication.

The company assembled at that wedding reception was a large one, not because numbers were desired for ostentatious display, but because of the peculiar and generous policy adopted by the bride, who had authorized a dozen or more of her friends to invite one or more of their friends, at their option. This privilege was used somewhat freely, but with no thought of abusing it. All were welcome, and yet there was a throng. Not only the parlors, but the upper rooms and also the grounds, were brought into requisition. Everything, animate and inanimate, seemed to be doing its best to extend the sphere of enjoyment and delight.

Mr. Vernon listened to the praises of his daughter until the words seemed to get mixed, and it was impossible half the time to tell what was said or who said it.

As for the father and mother of the bridegroom they

were never happier in their lives. Old Mr. McCready said he felt as if he had jumped back into the middle of fifty years ago; and Mrs. McCready could scarcely restrain herself from going up and giving her young namesake a kiss every few minutes, but she knew it would not look well. Mr. Forsythe and his law partner Mr. Edson, together with Mr. Hastings, were there, surrounded by a dozen or more of their immediate friends, who were listening with the deepest interest to their narrations of the adventures of their young client.

Then followed the story of the efforts of Grimshaw to ignore the rights of his partner, and defraud him out of everything, until arrested and hurled back by the strong arm of the law. These stories were listened to and repeated until almost every one of the guests had heard the whole or a part, and each one who could get near enough felt impelled to tender his congratulations again and again to the happy young bride, at the same time passing over a full measure of good-will and good words to the bridegroom.

"The history of this young woman," said Mr. Forsythe, speaking to a few friends, ladies and gentlemen, who had gathered around him, "is a forcible illustration of the possibilities of human effort. The amount of real good she has already done in the way of helping those who were in need of assistance and deserved to be aided, is incredible; while she has done ten, and perhaps a hundred times more indirectly, by impelling others to act. I am, you would suppose, too old to be moved by the example of a young woman like her, and yet I have in that way been impelled to do many a kind act which otherwise I would not have thought of. Direct personal and discriminating effort in behalf of those who come within our reach is the

form of benevolence most needed. It not only accomplishes more than any other, in proportion to the amount of time and money expended, but it operates both ways—blessing those who give as well as those who receive. That is the secret of her success and influence. She has done a great deal in proportion to her means, but has always known exactly what became of each dollar. She will undoubtedly follow the same rule now that her means are tenfold greater.”

Among the persons who listened with deep interest to these remarks, and occasionally asked a question, was our acquaintance, Arthur Glenn, who had often wondered what has become of the little girl whom he had helped to save from the clutches of Grimshaw, and who had come at the suggestion of Mr. Hastings, bringing with him also his wife a little more matronally in appearance, but with the same sweet, sensitive face and manner. They were duly presented to the bride, who recognized Mr. Glenn instantly, and between whom and his young wife, that introduction was the initial step of a friendship that lasted all their lives.

“I think, my dear,” McCready remarked to his bride, during a pause in the dancing which formed a graceful feature of the festivities, “that we must give our friend Scratch an order for a painting to be hung up in our private sitting room. I want him to take us just as we appeared when we first met on that stormy night near the railroad depot, and at the moment when I was turning aside and peeping into my purse to see if I had enough money to bring us both to the city.”

“A very appropriate ornament for our wall, and one that I should appreciate very much,” was the cordial reply.

“And who would have thought,” continued the

bridegroom, with a smile of fond pride and affection, and pressing closer the little hand that rested on his arm, "that the simple act of knocking a couple of old vases down, would have led to such great results."

"Which only goes to prove," said his fair young bride, raising her earnest eyes to his face. "That within what seem our most direful calamities are found concealed our greatest blessings. That act, which left me without a home, was the means by which my feet were guided to a home which shall be one to me as long as life shall last."

"Which means forever," replied McCready fervently. "For the short transit from this world to the other will afford, I trust, no interruption to that eternal union of heart and hand which we celebrate to-night."

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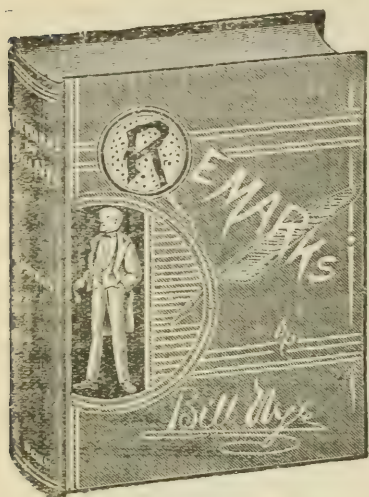
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